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THE ICONOGRAPHY OF VIKING-AGE STONE SCULPTURES: VISUAL EVIDENCE OF RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION IN THE ANGLO-SCANDINAVIAN COMMUNITIES OF NORTHERN ENGLAND

BY
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UNIVERSITY OF SZEGED
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SZTE Egyetemi Könyvtár
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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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In the fall of 1997, I arrived at the University of Göttingen to pursue research for my intended dissertation on the cults of Anglo-Saxon saints. An inspiring conversation with Wilhelm Heizmann about the iconography of the 'Fishing Stone' in Gosforth, however, led me to abandon my original idea for a dissertation and to turn my attention towards Viking-age sculptures. The continued support and encouragement of my teachers, colleagues, family, and friends have greatly contributed to the fact that my initial interest and curiosity eventually resulted in a doctoral dissertation.

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> [...] The stone which has been kicked by generations of clowns may come by curious little links of effect under the eyes of a scholar, through whose labours it may at last fix the date of invasions and unlock religions [...].
>
> —George Eliot, *Middlemarch*

1. INTRODUCTION

The so-called Viking Age in England denotes a period of over two hundred and fifty years, in which the Anglo-Saxons experienced a number of different encounters with various groups of Scandinavian peoples. The initial phase, the beginning of which is traditionally marked by the attack on Lindisfarne in 793, was characterized by sporadic raids with the aim of plundering. The winter of 850-51, when the Danish army first wintered on the isle of Thanet, opened a new phase of Viking activity in England: the phase of landtaking and settlement. From fierce raiders, the instruments of divine wrath, the Scandinavians gradually (but not necessarily peacefully) turned into settlers, and over the course of time became integrated into the native communities of the settlement areas. The intensity of their cultural influence varied from area to area, but they left noticable traces in nearly every form of intellectual production in early England. Growing scholarly interest in the Scandinavian settlement in England has refined the traditional fearsome image of the Vikings, and we are beginning to see the Scandinavian settlers as valuable contributors to the development of early English culture.

The study of Viking settlement in England has traditionally been based on three types of evidence: the testimony of written records, toponymic evidence, and linguistic influence. Archaeology only played a smaller role in the interpretations of the settlement, which was due, undoubtedly, to the relative poverty of the record. With the exception of the finds at York, the number of settlement structures, graves, and other forms of material culture of distinctly Scandinavian type is still relatively small. Stone carvings, however, constitute a unique group in this respect: not only do they display Scandinavian artistic influence, but they have survived in considerable numbers distributed over a large area. The majority of them are found in the northern part of England, which constituted the area of most intense Scandinavian settlement from the mid-ninth century onwards. It is

these Viking-age carvings from the North of England that will be the object of the present inquiry.

Christianization and cultural integration

In the scholarly literature on the Scandinavian settlement in England stone carvings are mostly quoted when mapping settlement areas or trying to demonstrate the active presence of pagan traditions in the Scandinavian territories. In both cases the focus of the inquiry is on distinguishing the new settlers from the native Anglo-Saxons by separating the two cultures. No doubt, the carvings that are to be discussed below very well serve this kind of research, since they clearly demonstrate the impact of the non-Christian narrative and pictorial tradition introduced by the Vikings. However, the primary value of these artifacts as historical documents lies in the fact that they bear witness to the process of religious and cultural adaptation that was initiated by the settlement of the Scandinavians. Therefore, instead of—or rather in addition to—being witnesses of the *intrusion* of the Northmen, they are witnesses of their *integration* into the native population. The ultimate result of this process of integration was the birth of the so-called Anglo-Scandinavian communities. This integration was a political necessity and was facilitated by cultural convergence, which, in terms of religion, meant the gradual Christianization of the new settlers.

The study of the conversion and assimilation of the Scandinavian settlers has so far concentrated mainly on the circumstances and outcome of this process, that is on its political, social, and economic background, its chronology, and its influence on various aspects of English culture. However, conversion, Christianization, and cultural assimilation are primarily intellectual processes, thus the surviving evidence should be re-evaluated in order to uncover traits of this intellectual process. The aim of the present study is to provide such a re-evaluation of the Viking-age sculptural material.

The best term to describe the intellectual process documented by the stone carvings is religious accommodation. In the course of religious accommodation elements of one narrative tradition become integrated, or accommodated, in the intellectual frame of a dominant world-view, while the receptive system of thought remains the dominant one. In this case the dominant system of thought is the Christianity of the Anglo-Saxons, and the source of the accommodated material is the mythological and heroic narrative

traditions of the Scandinavians. The motivation behind the accommodation process was twofold. On the one hand it promoted the understanding of the new religion, and yet provided a continuity of the native cultural tradition, and on the other, it satisfied specific sociocultural needs. The nature of the (rather selective) pagan material that appears on the stone monuments reflects exactly these needs.

The corpus

The corpus of stone sculpture is the richest corpus of Viking-age artifacts surviving in the British Isles. Sculptures have two unique features which distinguish them from other art forms. On the one hand, they were public monuments, easily accessible to anybody, and thus probably created with an eye toward a more general audience than that of manuscripts, ivories, or jewels. On the other hand, by the nature of the material of the artifacts, stone sculptures were relatively immobile, thus they can provide information about the cultural and artistic tradition and tastes of the people of a particular area which can be closely defined. According to Richard Bailey (1980, 22), "the majority of the carvings were produced within (at most) a few miles of the church or churchyard in which they were set up," and many if them are still *in situ* to this day as far as the place of production is concerned. (Some have been moved from the churchyard into the church building or the local museum.)[1]

Even though the chances of survival of stone monuments in general are greater than those of movable and perishable objects (such as wood carvings, textiles, manuscripts, etc.), we have to count with considerable losses, thus the surviving material is not necessarily representative of the contemporary production. In later periods many of the carved stones were reused as architectural decoration or simple building stones, which has led to partial or total destruction of the original carvings on the stones. Furthermore, the loss of iconographical representations in perishable media (especially wood cravings and textiles) creates serious gaps in the reconstruction of the transition and distribution of motifs. Iconographers have to deal with yet another kind of loss in connection with stone carvings. According to archaeological evidence as well as some aspects of stone carvings techniques, we can be certain that the majority of carved stones of the Viking period were

[1] Modern analysis of rock-type evidence suggests that some carvings did get moved around: either the stone was imported or the entire carved monument was moved (e.g. the Easby cross, cf. Lang 2001, 19). However, that seems to be the exception rater than the rule.

colored or painted (Bailey 1980, 25-26 and 1996b). From an iconographical point of view, the loss of the original paint means on the one hand the loss of the significance of colors or color coding, and on the other, the loss of fine details that were possibly painted but not carved.

The present study concentrates on a special group of Viking-age stone sculptures, those with identifiable pagan iconography. They constitute only a relatively small percentage of all surviving monuments from the Viking period, but the total number of these carvings and their relatively wide geographical distribution suggests that we are not dealing with a unique local phenomenon. Monuments with pagan and secular iconography were probably subject to a greater degree of loss than purely Christian carvings, nonetheless, the corpus comprises more than fifty monuments.

The somewhat arbitrary distinction between secular and pagan iconography, which is frequently used in scholarly literature, is based on the nature and explicitness of the Scandinavian iconographical material and our limited knowledge of the meaning of the carvings. Secular images in this context are horsemen, warriors, and male and female figures of Scandinavian style which we cannot associate with any known myth, as well as serpents and dragons which show Scandinavian influence in their designs but are not clearly identifiable as mythological characters. The function of these figural elements was either commemorative or decorative. The majority of these stones served as grave markers or commemorative stones, and it is their (mostly cruciform) shape, their location, and sometimes elements of Christian iconography that suggest a possible Christian context. The value of these carvings as documents of the integration process lies in the fact that they indicate the adaptation of Christian commemorative and burial practices. Of course, this is not necessarily proof of the conversion of the Scandinavians, but it certainly indicates a degree of social and cultural integration.

The focus of the present study is on Viking-age monuments with pagan iconography. They display depictions of mythological and heroic stories and characters that we can identify on the basis of literary and visual comparative material. As opposed to the wide range of themes depicted, for example, on the Gotland picture stones, it is only a handful of topics that feature on the carvings, which suggests a strong interest in or even fashion of particular themes and narratives and the total neglect of others. The mythological and heroic topics depicted are: the story of Weland the smith, Sigurd and

the legend of the Völsungs, Ragnarök (the eschatological story of Norse mythology) and related scenes, various depictions of evil (the Midgard serpent, Fenrir the wolf, the Bound Evil, etc.), Odin, the valkyries, and Yggdrasil, the cosmic tree.

From the perspective of the present study a further division of the carvings with mythological elements can be made. The first group includes monuments with no clearly Christian scenes accompanying the mythological ones, while the second one comprises those where the pagan and Christian elements are consciously combined in the iconographical program of the monuments. Even though most monuments of the first group also show elements of Christian cultural influence in their shape and location, it is the latter group, the stones combining pagan Scandinavian and Christian iconography, that are of special interest for the present study. The evidence value of these artifacts goes beyond that of social and artistic integration, and they bear witness to the intellectual process of cultural integration and religious accommodation.

Methodological concerns and the focus of the dissertation

Dealing with artifacts with pictorial representations, it is the methodological apparatus of iconography and iconology that seems most appropriate to interpret these carvings. The study of iconography deals with the identification of culture-specific visual representations with the aim of understanding the content and meaning of a certain representation and of tracing its visual and textual sources. The object of the study of iconography is artifacts with an intended textual referentiality, which presupposes a close relationship between the image and a text that exists independently of the visual representation. Consequently, iconographers are traditionally in search of that one text and the one single meaning behind the image or series of images, and their ultimate goal is to "translate" the images into texts. Of course, we are working with a very broad definition of text here which includes actual written texts, like the Bible, oral narratives in various versions, and even specific cultural and social practices manifested, for example, in rituals. While in Christian iconography the textual background is relatively easy to define, in visual representations of primarily oral cultures the texts are rather fluid.

In the case of Viking-age carvings with mixed iconography the relationship between image and text is often not only a one to one relationship, but also a constant interplay of two (or more) texts. These artifacts are meant not only to recall particular

texts, but to initiate and encourage the re-thinking of these texts by linking them to other texts. These monuments not only include references to various narratives, but also suggest a *mental performative practice* acted out by an active observer. In his 1993 article on the anti-iconography of medieval art Michael Camille pointed out the iconographers' and art historians' difficulty in the "double translation" of medieval images, that is, "to explore in writing, ideas that might have originated through writing like the Holy Writ, but which were then mediated outside or beyond it, in rituals, prayers, sermons, but most importantly of all, in images" (1993, 44-45). This statement is concerned with the impossibility of grasping the texts behind the images because of their oral and/or performative existence. In my opinion, by concentrating on these texts, an additional, non-textual, mental performative aspect of these artifacts becomes neglected. Let us look briefly at an example from what is probably the most famous Viking-age stone monument, the magnificent cross at Gosforth (discussed in greater detail below), to illustrate this visual and textual interplay.

At the bottom of side C (east) of the Gosforth cross [fig. 34] we find a somewhat unusual three-figure Crucifixion scene, the only clearly Christian image on the cross, with Christ, Longinus, and a female figure holding a horn-like object. The standard iconographical tradition of a three-figure Crucifixion scene would support the identification of the female character as Mary, but that would require John to be on her side. Longinus, the spear-bearer, on the other hand, should be paired with Stephaton, the sponge-bearer, according to the standard depictions. At this point we see the mixing of two different iconographical conventions (Christ—Mary—John and Christ—Longinus—Stephaton). Who is the female figure then? Knut Berg (1958, 31) suggested that she was intended to be Ecclesia with a chalice, but then she should be placed so as to be able to catch Christ's blood. Richard Bailey argues that "the object is an alabastron, the symbol of Mary Magdalene, and that both attendant figures are types of the converted heathen and the establishment of the Church."[2] Taking into account the rest of the iconographical program (which depicts Ragnarök, the apocalyptic episode of Germanic mythology, and related events), the reading of the pigtailed female figure as a valkyrie also seems possible. Both the hair style, the clothing, and the gesture of the figure holding a drinking horn recalls Scandinavian and insular depictions of valkyries receiving warriors in

[2] Bailey 1974a, I, 320-1; idem 1980, 130, cited in Bailey and Cramp 1988, 102.

Valhalla. Since the panel depicts a particular moment of the Crucifixion narrative, namely Christ's death by the spear, it does not seem odd at all to have a valkyrie there to receive "the victorious warrior," as Christ was often understood among the Anglo-Saxons, into the realm of death. Through this slight modification the well-known Christian iconographical motif becomes enriched or "footnoted" by a further sub-text, and the image serves as a link between the Christian narrative of the Crucifixion, and the rest of the carvings on the cross. Consequently, the image is not about one story or the other any more, but it is about both stories at the same time, the interplay of these stories, their distinctiveness *and* oneness.

An interest in the interplay and overlap of various narratives is what characterizes the process of religious accommodation. The choice of pagan iconographical elements and the iconographical program of some of the monuments reflect a particular way of thinking which facilitated the integration process. This thinking is based on an interest in shared patterns as links between narratives ranging from recurring objects or natural phenomena to similar characters, shared ethical concepts, and narrative structures. This *figurative thinking* largely disregards causality and the modern concept of the linearity of time, and in this it recalls one of the most popular biblical interpretative strategies of the Middle Ages, typology. Similarly to biblical typology, figurative thinking is also based on the unity of time and the interplay of past, present, and future where the past becomes a melting pot of narratives of different cultural origins. In the process of religious accommodation the Christian salvation story becomes the core narrative in which other narratives participate by their shared patterns. As opposed to biblical typology, however, in our case the so-called "antitype" does not fulfill the type, but it is rather "illustrated" or exemplified by it. It is a process of enrichment, a special way of explanation, but not biblical exegesis in the traditional sense. It promotes primarily the understanding of a new cultural situation.

The aim of the present dissertation is twofold: on the one hand to offer a detailed survey of the corpus of Viking-age stone monuments with pagan and heroic iconography, and on the other to detect the intellectual process that underlay the creation and reception of these monuments and explore their various functions in the contemporary cultural context.

State of research

Anglo-Saxon stone sculptures attracted the attention of local antiquarians from an early date. The antiquarian and later scholarly interest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries resulted in the first descriptions and interpretations of single monuments, as well as detailed regional surveys of the pre-Conquest material. One of the first surveys of the northern English material, William S. Calverly's catalogue of the stone monuments of Cumberland and Westmorland, was published in 1899 (edited by W.G. Collingwood). Philip M.C. Kermode's impressive catalogue of the Manx corpus, pre-Scandinavian as well as Scandinavian, with fine (although sometimes a little wishful) drawings, appeared in 1907. His interpretations of the Scandinavian material were often too imaginative, nonetheless his catalogue was an admirable achievement that set high standards for future scholars. The first comprehensive survey of the northern English material was accomplished by William G. Collingwood (the editor of Calverly's catalogue), whose *Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Age* appeared in 1927. Besides carefully documenting and cataloguing the surviving material, he offered valuable insights into the iconography of the carvings and suggested a chronology based on stylistic sequence. A chronology of Yorkshire sculpture, the largest group among Viking-age monuments, had been proposed earlier by Johannes Brøndsted in 1924.

With the rediscovery of and scholarly interest in Germanic mythology in the nineteenth century, local antiquarians turned their attention to those carvings that depicted mythological scenes and characters alongside Christian scenes. A connection between these scenes had soon been suggested and a number of groundbreaking, but often far too creative interpretations had been put forward. The most enthusiastic supporter of pagan-Christian parallels was George Stephens from Copenhagen. A fierce opponent of Stephens and his so-called "Scandinavian school" was J. Romilly Allen, who rejected the possibility that "heathen legends were ever adapted to Christian purposes" (Allen 1886, 334, cited in Bailey 1980, 101).

Major surveys of medieval English or specifically Anglo-Saxon art, architecture and sculpture (among the earlier are, most notably, Brown 1937, Kendrick 1972 [1938] and 1974 [1949], Saunders 1932, Gardner 1951, Rice 1952, and Stone 1972 [1955], and among the more recent publications Dodwell 1982, Wilson 1984, and Backhouse et al. 1984) all included valuable summaries of the Viking-age sculptural material. They treated

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the monuments primarily from an art historical point of view, described their stylistic development and iconography, and established the dating and chronology of the carvings.

A number of new archaeological discoveries which have been made since 1927, the date of Collingwood's catalogue, significantly increased the known corpus of pre-Conquest carvings in northern England as well as our knowledge about the monuments. The most significant of these advances were undoubtedly the discovery of the pre-Conquest cemetery under York Minster, which was excavated by Derek Phillips in the late 1960s, and Rosemary J. Cramp's excavations in Jarrow in the 1970s, which shed new light on early sculpture. In response to the scholarly needs evoked by the growing corpus of Anglo-Saxon stone carvings, a major cataloguing project and publication series was started at the University of Durham, under the general editorship of Rosemary J. Cramp, and sponsored by the British Academy. The first volume of the *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture* was published in 1984, covering the sculptural material of the present-day counties of Durham and Northumberland. The other five volumes published so far cover the areas of Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire North-of-the-Sands (vol. II), York and Eastern Yorkshire (vol. III), South-East England (vol. IV), Lincolnshire (vol. V), and Northern Yorkshire (vol. VI). The *Corpus* volumes present a detailed description and discussion of each surviving monument and fragment in a given area, accompanied by excellent photographic material and a complete bibliography.

The Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture project initiated regional surveys conducted by a group of scholars and inspired new kinds of inquiries. In addition to archaeological and iconographical examinations, geological surveys have been carried out to determine the types of stone used and to reveal regional links. These have redrawn the map of artistic centers, and resulted in changes in dating and chronology as well as in the significance of some pieces for stylistic evaluation.

In the past three decades the study of pre-Conquest Stone sculpture has undergone significant changes. A modern scholarly interest and new approach to these monuments focusing on style, artistic influences, and local groups was initiated in the 1970s by Rosemary Cramp, Jim Lang, and Richard Bailey, among others. They mapped out local "schools" and identified particular masters based on the use of motifs, templates, and cutting and carving techniques. (Among the most significant writings see Cramp on the Otley crosses (1971) and Hexham (1974), Pattison (1973) on York, Lang (1973) on

Ryedale, Morris on the Tees Valley (1976) and Aycliffe (1978), and Adcock's survey of interlace patterns (1978)). The only monograph on the subject, Richard Bailey's 1980 book on Viking-age sculpture, shed new light on this special group of monuments and has constituted a starting point for the present study. Stone sculpture has always played an important role in studies of the Scandinavian settlement in England. In the past decade there has been growing interest in questions of identity, conversion, cultural assimilation, and the development and character of Anglo-Scandinavian settlements, and sculptural evidence features prominently in these studies. Recent works on sculpture (e.g. by P. Sidebottom, D.A. Stocker, P. Everson) have gone beyond mere archaeological and art historical analyses and focus on the communities in which the artifacts were created and examine the monuments in their social and cultural contexts.

My dissertation is in line with this latest development in scholarship, and suggests the re-evaluation of the existing sculptural material in order to answer a new set of questions concerning the intellectual background of the creation and reception of Viking-age monuments with pagan iconography. My aim is to interpret the sculptures as historical and cultural documents of an intellectual process that facilitated the integration and conversion of the Scandinavian settlers.

In order to achieve this goal, a number of preliminary questions have to be answered about the historical background, the process of conversion, and the corpus itself. Each chapter of the dissertation is designed to answer a particular group of questions. Chapter two defines the historical context of the present study and provides an overview of the Viking period, focusing on various aspects of the Scandinavian settlement and the conversion of the Scandinavian settlers as a historically documented public process. Chapter three, the longest chapter, is dedicated to the sculptural evidence. The complete corpus of Viking-age stone sculptures with pagan iconography is surveyed in a "philological manner." The carvings are presented in thematic groups. The discussion of each group begins with an overview of the textual and visual sources. This is followed by a pre-iconographical description and iconographical interpretation of each monument. Finally in the discussion I review the monuments in a Christian cultural context and point out possible links and instances of overlap, which might have contributed to the survival and accommodation of the specific narrative. Chapter four examines the specifics of the process of religious accommodation in the Anglo-Scandinavian communities, while

chapter five explores the characteristics of figurative thinking that enabled members of the Anglo-Scandinavian communities to cope with new cultural situation. In chapter six I return to the sculptures themselves and, having contextualized them historically, culturally, and intellectually, examine what function they might have had in their original context. Besides offering new readings of the iconography of specific carvings, the main contribution of the dissertation to our understanding of the Viking period is the exploration of the intellectual aspects of the integration of the Scandinavian settlers through an analysis of the sculptural evidence and a consideration of the carvings as historical-cultural documents.

2. THE VIKING AGE

The term Viking Age with regard to England refers to a period of about two hundred and seventy years, from the late eighth to the mid-eleventh century. It is customary to pick clear-cut historical events to denote the beginning and the end of a period. In the case of the Viking Age in England, it is usually the first attack on Lindisfarne on 8 June 793 that is given as the starting point, and the death of Harthacnut, the last Danish king on the English throne in 1042 (or the battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066) serves as the terminal date. Both the flaws and the advantages of such man-made divisions of time are obvious. With the Viking period in England one problem is that there was considerable geographical differentiation (between north and south, but also between east and west) both in its date of beginning and end. The other problem is that a political-historical periodization does not necessarily reflect the time frame of the cultural influence of the Vikings in England. Since the present study concentrates on the north of England (approximately the territory of the pre-Viking kingdom of Northumbria) and is primarily concerned with the cultural influence of the Scandinavian settlers from the ninth to the mid-eleventh centuries, a chronology of the events of this period from a northern point of view will be provided below.

An overview of military and political events

The first phase of Viking activity in the North was characterized by occasional raids and plunders, directed, according to the testimony of written sources, mostly at monasteries and religious communities, which were repositories of treasure without military defence. These sporadic raids had little direct influence on the Anglo-Saxon population, and were hardly seen as a general threat to England, but because the ecclesiastical victims recorded their sufferings in writing, they have heavily influenced the general image of the Vikings handed down to posterity. Contemporary records of the attacks on major monastic communities (Lindisfarne, Jarrow, and Iona) show the horror caused by the unknown raiders coming from the sea. The news quickly spread even beyond the British Isles. Clergymen and scholars, like Alcuin of York, saw the Northmen as instruments of divine punishment for the sins of the people of England, and thus the

raids initially evoked spiritual, rather than military reactions. (Even King Alfred considered the restoration of faith and learning an effective means of defence, alongside his military improvements (Keynes 1997, 48).)

The early raiders of the late eighth century probably came from Norway, but we can assume that "Danes" were also involved from the beginning. The majority of them returned to Scandinavia at the end of the campaigning season, but it is likely that, "as time passed, increasing numbers were prepared to stay away for more extended periods, perhaps even for good" (Keynes 1997, 51). The origin of later raids is more uncertain, with a growing number of Scandinavians on the Continent launching attacks on England from there, as well as continuing interest from Scandinavia.

The first quarter of the ninth century appears to have been a relatively peaceful period, but the raids resumed again along the North Sea littoral in the 830s and in southern England in 835. The increasing social and political unrest in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms only contributed to the success of the raiders. According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (ASC), it was in the winter of 850-51 that the Vikings first wintered on English soil. This marked the beginning of intensive raids of large naval forces, and led to the arrival of the "great heathen army" in 865-66 under the leadership of Ivar the Boneless and Halfdan, sons of Ragnar Lothbrok. Having spent the winter in East Anglia, the army (or fractions thereof) attacked Northumbria in 866, Mercia in 867, moved back to Northumbria in 868, and then returned to East Anglia via Mercia in 869.

The year 876 brought considerable changes in the nature of the Viking presence in northern England. Halfdan, who had taken the kingdom of Northumbria the year before, started to share out land among his warriors in the Vale of York, and the systematic Scandinavian settlement of the North began.

The Viking settlement of Northumbria reflects an east-west division both with respect to the time of settlement and the ethnic involvement of the Scandinavians. The two areas of Scandinavian settlement are: the East, i.e., most parts of Yorkshire, dominated by the Danes from the mid-870s onwards; and the northwestern and western parts, i.e., Cumbria, Lancashire, and parts of Cheshire and Yorkshire, dominated mostly by Hiberno-Norse groups after 900. The documentary evidence on activities in these two areas is unbalanced in favor of the eastern areas.

The northern recension of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (D and E), Symeon of Durham's *Historia Regum*, and Roger of Wendover's chronicle of St. Albans only provide fragmentary evidence on the events of the period of settlement and Viking rule, even though they all rely on and incorporate earlier Northumbrian annals (Sawyer 1978, 4). The *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, originally compiled ca. 945 and extended in the mid-eleventh century in Durham, adds interesting details to the history of the period, however, without the aim of providing an overall picture. Continental and Irish annals (notably the *Annals of Ulster*) and the West Saxon versions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* document the activities in the north of England from an external (but not necessarily unbiased) point of view. In spite of the difficulties, a correlation of the extant sources[3] allows us to reconstruct the political events in Northumbria from the capture of York by the Vikings to the restoration of English rule, i.e. from the mid-ninth to the mid-tenth century, as follows (based on Smyth 1978; Keynes 1997; Stenton 2001 [1971], 252-68, 320-363; Bailey 1980, 30-44; the ASC (Swanton 1998 [1996]); Lapidge, et al., 2001, 500-516 [Appendix by Simon Keynes]; and Loyn 1997 [1994]) [with important events in the South indicated in square brackets]:

866 Capture of York by the Great Danish Army on 1 November

867 Defeat of the Northumbrian army in vain attempt to dislodge Danes from York; death of the Northumbrian kings Osberht and Ælla; Ecgberht I appointed by the Danes

868 [Great Army at Nottingham]

869 Great Army returned to York and ravaged Northumbria (868-69)

869 [Great Army moved from York to East Anglia; death of King Edmund of East Anglia and the Danish conquest of East Anglia]

871 [Great Army in Wessex]

872 Northumbrian revolt against Danish rule; Ecgberht I, the Danish sub-king, and Archbishop Wulfhere of York expelled from the city

[3] The collation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* with the Irish annals confronts us with a number of problems and difficulties, such as the relationship of the surviving manuscipt copies to the original annals, the difference in the Anglo-Saxon and Irish reckoning of time, the cultural and linguistic remoteness of the annalists from the Scandinavians, and the general bias of these records (Smyth 1978, 8).

873 Halfdan (brother of Ivar the Boneless) with his section of the Great Army marched from London to York, suppressed the Northumbrian revolt, and reinstated Archbishop Wulfhere. Ricsige installed as Danish sub-king

874 [King Burgred driven into exile; Great Army in Mercia]

874-75 Halfdan took the kingdom of Northumbria for himself, while Guthrum and his allies established a base at Cambridge and launched a second invasion of Wessex; Halfdan wintered on the River Tyne and attacked the Picts and the Strathclyde Britons; Bishop Eardwulf and his community abandoned Lindisfarne and took with them the body of St. Cuthbert;[4] Halfdan arrived in Dublin and slew its king, Eysteinn Olafsson

876 Halfdan settled his Danish warriors in the Vale of York and "they proceeded to plough and to support themselves" (ASC) (establishment of the Scandinavian settlements in the North)

877 Halfdan expelled by his warriors [later Durham tradition suggests 882]; he sailed against Dublin with a few ships and was slain by the Dublin leader, Bardr, at Strangford Lough; the Viking army in Mercia "shared out some of it and gave some to Ceolwulf" (ASC) (establishment of the Scandinavian settlements in the East Midlands)

878 Eadwulf of Bamburgh acceeded to be ruler of the Northumbrians [Third invasion of Wessex; King Alfred's victory at Edington; baptism of Guthrum and thirty of his men]

879 [Danes settled and shared out the land in East Anglia (establishment of the Scandinavian settlements in the East)]

879-80 [Formal recognition of the "Danelaw"]

883 Lindisfarne community resettled at Chester-le-Street; election of Guthfrith I as the first Christian Danish king of York

893 Northumbrian Danes joined Hasteinn in his war against King Alfred; Sigfrith's unsuccessful attack on Dublin

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[4] According to the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, the bodies of St. Cuthbert and King Ceolwulf had already been removed earlier from Lindisfarne to Norham on the Tweed by Ecgred, who was bishop from 830 to 845. Whether Cuthbert's body returned to the island to be removed again in 875 is uncertain. According to Peter Sawyer, "the later tradition that the body was taken from Lindisfarne in 875 is probably due to the importance of the island in the life of St. Cuthbert, reinforced by the natural desire on the part of later members of the community to minimize the importance of Norham" (1978, 5).

895 Death of King Guthfrith (August 24) and his burial in York Minster; death of Archbishop Wulfhere of York; Sigfrith's succession to the York kingship

896 One force of the Great Danish Army moved into Northumbria, the other into East Anglia

899 Death of Bishop Eardwulf of Lindisfarne at Chester-le-Street; [death of King Alfred of Wessex]

900 Archbishop Æthelbald appointed to the See of York; Æthelwold, son of King Æthelred of Wessex, accepted as king by the York Danes; great disturbance in Northumbria

902 Dublin Norsemen expelled by the Irish; colonization of north-west England by Norsemen; colonization of the Wirral by Hingamund and his Hiberno-Norsemen; Æthelwold slain, leading a Danish coalition against Wessex

907 Mercians and King Edward the Elder built forts along the Mercian border with the Northumbrian Danes

909 Army of King Edward invaded Northumbria

910 Northumbrians invaded Mercia and were defeated at Tettenhall, and their kings, Eowils and Halfdan II were slain; English settlers in the north-west (such as Abbot Tilred of Heversham and Alfred, son of Brihtwulf) fled eastwards over the Pennines to the safety of the Wear valley

ca. 911 Ragnald (son of Sihtric I, king of Dublin and grandson of Ivar the Boneless), took York

913 Ragnald moved north to the Tyne and drove Aldred, ruler of Bamburgh, from Bernicia

914 Ragnald's first victory at Corbridge over Aldred of Bamburgh and Constantine, King of Scots; Ragnald settled some of his followers between the Tees and Wear; Ragnald's army crossed Lowland Scotland, attacked Dumbarton on Clyde and sailed into the Irish Sea; Ragnald's victory over the rival Norse fleet led by Bardr Ottarson

917 Ragnald and Sihtric Caech ('the One-Eyed') (sons of Sihtric I, king of Dublin and grandsons of Ivar the Boneless) invaded Ireland

918 Ragnald left Waterford and invaded Lowland Scotland, and won a second victory at Corbridge on the Tyne over the Bernicians and the Scots

919 Ragnald captured York for the second time; Sihtric retook Dublin

920 Ragnald and other northern British rulers submitted to King Edward the Elder; death of Ragnald

921 Sihtric II Caech succeeded to York kingship

924 [Death of Edward the Elder; succession of Æthelstan (925)]

926 Treaty between Sihtric II and Æthelstan at Tamworth; marriage of Sihtric to Eadgyth, sister of Æthelstan

927 Death of Sihtric II and brief succession of Guthfrith II (son of Sihtric I) to York kingship (presumably also of Olaf I Cuarán ('of the Sandal')); Æthelstan invaded Northumbria and demolished the Danish fortress at York; Æthelstan assumed kingship of Northumbria and concluded a treaty with the northern rulers at Dacre; return of Gothfrith to Dublin

927-39 King Æthelstan, ruler of Northumbria

934 Æthelstan visited Chester-le-Street and led an expedition against Scotland; death of Guthfrith II in Dublin; succeeded by Olaf Guthfrithsson in Dublin kingship

937 Olaf Guthfrithsson led Scottish and Strathclyde British coalition against Æthelstan; invaders defeated by English at Brunanburh

938 Return of Olaf Guthfrithsson to Dublin

939 [Death of Æthelstan (October 27), succeeded by Edmund]; second invasion of Northumbria and occupation of York by Olaf II Guthfrithsson

940 Olaf Guthfrithsson and Archbishop Wulfstan of York overran Danish Mercia; England divided along the Watling Street between Edmund and Olaf; Olaf now king of Dublin, Northumbria, and Danish Mercia; Olaf Cuarán Sihtricson left Dublin and joined his cousin, Olaf Guthfrithsson, at York

941 Death of Olaf II Guthfrithsson, succeeded in York by Olaf I Cuarán Sihtricson

942 Olaf Cuarán lost Danish Mercia to King Edmund, who recovered control over the territory of the Five Boroughs

943 Olaf Cuarán baptised at King Edmund's court, and his cousin, Ragnald Guthfrithsson, later confirmed there

944 Edmund invaded Northumbria and drove out Olaf and Ragnald

944-46 King Edmund, ruler of Northumbria

945 Edmund invaded Strathclyde and made it tributary to King Malcolm of Scotland; Olaf Cuarán returned to Dublin

946 Murder of King Edmund, succession by his brother, Eadred

946-47 King Eadred, ruler of Northumbria

947 Archbishop Wulfstan of York and the Northumbrian *witan* submitted to Eadred (946), but shortly afterwards accepted Erik Bloodaxe (son of Harald Fairhair) from Norway as their king

948 Eadred ravaged Ripon and was attacked by the York army, but eventually forced York to reject Eric Bloodaxe

948-50 King Eadred, ruler of Northumbria

950 Olaf Cuarán returned to York

952 Olaf Cuarán was driven out of York by the Northumbrians and returned to Dublin; Eric Bloodaxe returned; Kind Eadred seized and imprisoned Archbishop Wulfstan of York

953 Olaf Cuarán campaigning in Ireland where he ruled as king of Dublin until 981

954 Eric Bloodaxe expelled from York and slain at Stainmore; King Eadred succeeded to the kingdom of Northumbria -- end of Scandinavian rule at York; Archbishop Wulfstan restored to a bishopric in Dorchester

955 Death of Kind Eadred

956 Death of Archbishop Wulfstan

In the second half of the tenth century, Scandinavian settlement areas were brought under English royal control, and in 959 the formal political unity of the country was achieved by King Edgar. With the political re-integration of the northern areas into the English kingdom, the focus of historical documentation shifted to the south. The Danish conquest of England in the early eleventh century was a political issue between Christian kings, which marked a new phase in English-Scandinavian relations. The raids led by Olaf Tryggvason of Norway, Svein Forkbeard of Denmark, and later by his son, Cnut, were based on a large army, and effected mostly the southern coast and the south-east (except for the 993 ravaging of Northumbria and Cnut's campaign to York). The events under the reign of Æthelred the Unready culminated in the Danish accession ot the English throne in 1016.

The assimilation and social integration of the Scandinavian settlers in the areas of the Danelaw continued in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries both in the North and the East, and it was probably intensified in the remaining part of the Anglo-Saxon period, even though the amount of documentary evidence falls off and military and political activities become less telling about the actual process of settlement and integration. One might note, however, that even though the political unity of the country had been achieved by Edgar, a distinction between the Danish and the English populations in terms of legislation and customs was maintained and legally acknowledged, as is demonstrated by the law codes of Edgar and Æthelred the Unready. This certainly contributed to the development of a collective identity among the (by then ethnically heavily mixed) population of the Danelaw.

The Scandinavian settlement of the North is documented also by evidence other than the written records of the political and military activities of the ninth and tenth centuries. This non-narrative evidence consists of linguistic and place-name evidence, material culture, coinage, law codes and charters, and of course art. A detailed evaluation of every piece of evidence would clearly exceed the limits of the present study, and it has already been accomplished in great detail in a number of excellent scholarly publications. Therefore, in the following, only a brief survey of the extent and structure of the Scandinavian settlement of the Danelaw will be provided, with the aim of drawing a comparison between the two areas of northern settlement, east and west, in order to shed some light on the context of the corpus of carvings to be examined.

Anglo-Scandinavian settlement structure

By the middle of the tenth century Northumbria achieved formal unity in ecclesiastical terms under the Archbishop of York and the community of St. Cuthbert. The area was, however, by no means unified culturally and ethnically. Place-name and sculptural evidence suggests three major areas of cultural as well as political influence: (1) the area of Anglian rulership north of the Tyne, controlled by the rulers of Bamburgh; (2) the Anglo-Scandinavian settlement areas centered around York; and (3) the northwestern regions of predominantly Hiberno-Norse influence (with Britons in Strathclyde) (Bailey 1980, 37). The area north of the Tyne passed into the hands of

Ragnald in 918, but shows relatively little Scandinavian influence when compared to the other two settlement areas.

The East (most parts of Yorkshire)

The Viking settlement of Eastern Northumbria was largely restricted to Yorkshire, centered around the city of York. The settlement of the area by the Danes started with Halfdan's sharing out land in 876 (cf. ASC 876). The subsequent three quarters of a century can be divided into two phases (Bailey 1980, 31-33): (1) from 876 to 918, the period of the reign of the Christian king Guthfrith and a series of shadowy rulers with Scandinavian names; and (2) from 918 to 954 (i.e. from the end of the English rule in Bernicia and the accession of Ragnald to the death of Erik Bloodaxe), a period of struggle between Hiberno-Norse and English rulers for the control of York. The integration of Northumbria and York into the English kingdom in the second half of the tenth century did not put an end to the political turmoil and instability, and the eastern areas remained "a potential source of trouble for the southern kings" (Bailey 1980, 33).

A telling kind of evidence for Scandinavian influence on the settlement structure of the eastern areas is topographical names. The large number of place-names with Scandinavian linguistic elements can be divided into three major groups: (1) the so-called Grimston-hybrids, where an Old Norse and an English element are compounded (most frequently OE *tûn* combined with a Scandinavian personal name); (2) the *by*-names (ON *by* meaning 'farmstead' or 'village'); and (3) the *thorp*-names (ON *thorp* meaning 'secondary settlement, an outlying farmstead or hamlet').[5]

The once widely accepted evidence value of place names with Scandinavian influence has recently been challenged on the basis of new archaeological and documentary evidence and as a result of modern methodological considerations. There are three major problems with place names in general: (1) they rarely allow any exact and certain dating; (2) the circumstances of naming are often unknown; and (3) place names do not necessarily reflect the ethnicity of the population of a given area. It is therefore

[5] According to Gillian Fellows Jensen (cited in Bailey 1980, 38), the sequence of land-taking is reflected in the place-names as follows:
(1) During the first stage Scandinavians seem to have settled in established English villages, and perhaps modified the names to produce so-called Grimston-hybrids (OE *tûn* combined with a Scandinavian personal name).
(2) The second stage of the colonization is characterized by settlement names ending in *-by*.
(3) The last stage is marked by the appearance of names ending in *-thorp*.

unwise to make a simple connection between Scandinavian place names and Viking settlement.

It is now being realized that *-by* and *-thorp* names do not necessarily indicate direct Scandinavian colonization of unused land, as had been suggested previously, but they often cover renamed Anglo-Saxon villages (Lund 2000, 132), and thus indicate a disruption of the traditional system of landholding and the detachment of outlying dependencies of estates (Sawyer 1978, 7). Recent scholarship has also questioned how conclusive the frequency of Scandinavian settlement and field names can be about the intensity of Scandinavian settlement and the number of settlers involved. Instead of suggesting a direct correlation between the frequency of Scandinavian place names and the density of colonization, we should accept the possibility that many of the Scandinavian place names only bear evidence of strong Scandinavian influence on the language of the area, but not necessarily the actual presence of ethnic Scandinavians in the given settlement. Therefore, place and field names can provide information about the area of Scandinavian influence (and often the interaction between natives and settlers), but it is less conclusive concerning the extent of Scandinavian settlement, its chronology, and the exact settlement area.

As far as the geographical distribution is concerned, place names reveal the following about Scandinavian influence and settlement. The eastern parts of the Danelaw (eastern parts of Yorkshire and the Midlands, and East Anglia) show a large number of *thorp*-names, and a considerably larger number of Grimston-hybrids than the west. In Yorkshire the endings *-by* and *-thorp* are only rarely combined with English personal names, which suggests that this area was under strong Scandinavian influence, and these place names might even have denoted farms or settlements established by Scandinavians. Moving beyond the Tyne, Scandinavian place names become less frequent. The western areas, where the total number of Scandinavian place-names is smaller, have mostly *by*-names. Place-name evidence in general thus suggests a more intensive Scandinavian influence and settlement in the East.

Archaeological excavations at York and elsewhere have revealed some information about the material culture of the settlers, but relatively soon after the initial settlement the differences between the native population and the Scandinavians became indistinguishable (Keynes 1997, 67). It is primarily in surviving metalwork and sculpture

that we find evidence of a prevailing "Scandinavian taste" and signs of contact kept with the Scandinavian homeland.

The West (Northwestern and Western Parts of Northumbria [Cumbria, Lancashire, and parts of Cheshire and Yorkshire])

Due to the location of these areas west of the Pennines, the Scandinavian settlement here was separate from that of Halfdan and the Danes of York, and involved Norwegian, Hiberno-Norse (or Gaelic-Norse), Irish, and Scottish-Norse groups (as well as some Britons in Strathclyde). Since contemporary chroniclers were preoccupied primarily with the English expansion towards York, Viking activities in the west remained poorly documented. Norwegian and Gaelic elements in place-names provide some information on the ethnicity of the peoples involved, and the general turmoil in the region in the second decade of the tenth century suggests that a later invasion and settlement took place around that time in the wake of the expansion of the Norwegians in the Irish Sea area (Bailey 1980, 34ff).

The few written sources of the western settlement include the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, which documents the flight of Cuthbert's community to the west in 875, records rulers with English names in Cumbria in the second decade of the tenth century, and mentions "pirates" in the region in ca. 915. The so-called *Three Fragments* of the Irish Annals mention the settlement of a certain Ingimund from Dublin in the Wirral near Chester, probably after 902, with a group of settlers probably including people of Hiberno-Norse as well as Irish origin (Bailey 1980, 35).

The presence of Norwegian and Gaelic components in place-names supports our understanding of the expansion and settlement, but it also poses some difficulties and uncertainties. On the one hand, the differentiation between Danish and Norwegian linguistic elements is often impossible to identify (at this point we only differentiate between different dialects of Old Norse), and on the other, the origin of the Gaelic components is uncertain, since they might have also come from settlers from West-Scotland and the Scottish Isles, both of which have evidence for the presence of Scandinavian settlers among the Gaelic population.

The Solway area presents further complications as far as the ethnicity of settlers is concerned, since from the early tenth century to King Æthelred's expedition to the North

in 1000, parts of the southern side of the Solway belonged to the British Kingdom of Strathclyde.

The "Danish-Norse division" and the problems of ethnicity

Whether we can draw lines of ethnic division within the Scandinavian settlement areas has frequently been called into question. Uncertainty surrounds both the possibility of a clear ethnic distinction between the native Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians, and also that of a further division between Danish and Norse settlers. Ethnicity is a subjective and flexible construct, a perceived identity based on the belief in the unity and common characteristics of a community of people (after Amory 1993, 3, cited in Trafford 2000, 19). This dynamic and situational nature of ethnic identity calls into question any direct correlation between ethnic groups and language, culture and religion, artefacts, and racial characteristics (Hadley 1997, 83). Whether our retrospective distinction between "the English" and "the Danes" was perceived the same way by the peoples involved will never be known, but sporadic references in contemporary sources do suggest a certain ethnic distinction. In our search for differences (in religion, social organization, language, etc.) between the natives and the settlers in order to account for the cultural and social processes taking place in the Danelaw, we often fail to emphasize the similarities between these ethnic groups, which provided the basis for the relatively rapid integration and assimilation of the new settlers. The consequences of these cultural similarieties and differences will be discussed in greater detail below in chapter 4. The differentiation between Danish and Norse settlers seems to be more than an ethnic one, and requires an understanding of ethnicity based on cultural and religious rather than on "racial" terms.

Documentary and material evidence does point towards ethnic differences (Danes vs. [Hiberno-]Norse) in the initial settlement of the eastern and western areas of the Danelaw, yet by no means should we see either of these groups of settlers as ethnically homogenous (in a "biological" sense), especially not in the western areas, where the ethnic representation appears to be extremely colorful and complicated. Differences in the ethnicity of the population of the North were noted and emphasized by contemporary annalists. The Winchester MS (A) of the ASC recorded the following for the year 924:

> And then the king of Scots and all the nation of Scots chose him [Edward] as father and lord; and [so also did] Rægnald and Eadwulf's sons and *all those who*

> *live in Northumbria, both English and Danish and Norwegians and others*; and also the king of the Strathclyde Britons and all the Strathclyde Britons. (Swanton 1998 [1996], 104; italics are mine)

How clear the difference between the various groups of Scandinavians was, is unclear. It is interesting to note, however, that two decades later, in 942, the ASC indicates another difference among the Scandinavians, besides that of "ethnic origin," in the alliterative poem remembering the capture of the Five Boroughs:

> [...] Earlier *the Danes were*
> *under Northmen, subjected by force*
> *in heathens' captive fetters,*
> for a long time until they were ransomed again,
> to the honour of Edward's son,
> protector of warriors, King Edmund. (Swanton 1998 [1996], 110; italics are mine)

The division made here, in the context of Olaf Cuarán Sihtricson's baptism at the court of Edmund, is between the Christian "Danes" (presumably the Anglo-Danish population) and the heathen "Northmen" (the Hiberno-Norse inhabitants). The capture of the Five Boroughs is thus seen as an act of liberation of the "Danes" from their subjection to the heathen Northmen. The distinction between "Anglo-Saxons" (south of the Humber), "Northumbrians" (the English and Anglo-Danish inhabitains), "pagans" (the Hiberno-Norse elements), and "Britons" (of Strathclyde) also appears in the charters of King Eadred (Keynes 1997, 71), which indicates that religious affiliation was mingled into the concept of ethnicity.[6]

In order to understand the ethnic-cultural background of the sculptural evidence discussed below, it is important to note that, in the light of the contemporaries' association of the Norsemen with paganism, the generally accepted Danish-Norse division of the eastern and north-western settlement areas respectively should not only be seen as an ethnic division in the traditional sense, but also as a cultural distinction, which seems to suggest a longer prevalence of the Scandinavian cultural traditions in the north-western

[6] In the twelfth century, William of Malmesbury in his *History of the English Kings* says about the reign of King Edward (899-924): "The Northumbrians were already mingled with the Danes into one race" (Stubbs 1887, 135, cited in Bailey 1980, 44). It is interesting to note that, in contrast to contemporary evidence, historical memory must have "pushed back" the date of cultural integration, probably equating it with political integration, i.e. the establishment of the Danelaw.

areas. The religion and conversion of the Scandinavian settlers in general and the artistic representation of their paganism will be discussed in greater detail below.

On the extent of the Scandinavian settlement

Beside the question of ethnicity, it is the extent of the Scandinavian settlement that has generated long scholarly disputes. In the light of the evidence available today, very little can be regarded as fact. Various hypotheses have been advanced to explain the intensity of Scandinavian influence in the North (and the East) and its relation to the number of settlers involved. The "variables" include the size of the armies involved in the initial settlement and the possibility of a secondary peasant migration from Scandinavia. Historians of the first half of the twentieth century, notably Sir Frank Stenton and Eilert Ekwall, argued for a Scandinavian migration and settlement on a massive scale. It was Peter Sawyer's 1958 article that initiated the scholarly debate on the extent of the settlement, challenging the views of "traditionalist" historians and arguing for a small-scale migration. The theories suggested range from the "maximalist" to the "minimalist" position, where maximalism is traditionally associated with philologists (particularly toponymists), while minimalism is promoted mainly by archaeologists and some historians (Trafford 2000, 21). The following theories have been put forward (Keynes 1997, 68):[7]

(1) The conquest and initial settlement of eastern and northern England, conducted by members of large Viking armies, was followed in the late ninth century by a large-scale peasant migration from Scandinavia, "on a scale sufficient to swamp the indigenous population and to produce a distinctively 'Danish' society."

(2) "The settlements were conducted by the remnants of relatively small Viking armies, whose political dominance enabled them to exert an influence [...] out of all proportion to their actual number; and that it was the descendants of these old soldiers, in the tenth century, who expanded from the areas of initial settlement by a gradual process of internal colonization."

(3) "The initial settlements were on a small scale, made by members of the Viking armies who [...] established themselves in the most advantageous positions; and [...] in the late ninth and early tenth centuries further settlements took place on a much larger

scale behind this protective screen, amounting to a secondary migration from Scandinavia to eastern England."

(4) "The settlements in the late ninth century were conducted by the remnants of relatively large Viking armies, in politically dominant positions, [... and] from the outset these settlers mixed and intermarried with the indigenous English population, adopting some of their customs, and influencing or introducing others." This has led to the establishment of an Anglo-Danish society which had, however, retained a "notionally 'Danish' identity."

Place-name evidence suggests the colonisation of previously unused land (to some extant), which indicates an expansion of population between the late ninth century and the Norman Conquest. Richard Bailey argues for a massive influx of Scandinavian settlers on the basis of the great variety of Scandinavian words incorporated in place-names, as well as on the basis of the high frequency of *-by* and *-thorp* place-names combined with Scandinavian personal names, which, in his view, represent land-taking above and beyond that represented by English and so-called Grimston-hybrid names (Bailey 1980, 38-40).[8] Whether the expansion of the population was due to new settlers or the result of local population growth and internal colonization, or both, is unclear. The extensive use of Scandinavian personal names might have also resulted from the growing popularity and prestige of Scandinavian names in general in mixed communities, thus it cannot be interpreted as an unambiguos proof of new settlers.

While there is evidence that the Scandinavian settlement of certain parts of the Danelaw was initiated by leaders of the Viking armies active in England in the 860s and 870s, no clear evidence can support the theory of a secondary (peasant) migration coming directly from Scandinavia. By now it is generally accepted that the invading armies were not as large as formerly thought,[9] thus the initial phase of settlement cannot be called a migration. Whether the strong linguistic influence necessitates the assumption of a secondary migration on larger scale (as suggested by Otto Jespersen, Henry Loyn, etc.

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[7] Review articles and summaries of the development of the debate include Fellows-Jensen 1975, Wormald 1982, Hadley 1997, Trafford 2000, etc.

[8] The preservation of Old Norse inflections (e.g. genitive), the substitution of Old Norse phonetic forms for existing English sounds in many names, and the general influence of the language of the Scandinavians on English all point towards the presence of a larger number of settlers (Bailey 1980, 40).

[9] Alfred P. Smyth (1999, 4-11), by contrast, gives a detailed discussion of the size of the armies involved in the raids and conquest, favoring the idea of large fleets and armies (and emphasizing the cruelty of the invaders, hoping to strike a blow against "pro-Viking" scholars).

(Lund 2000, 147)) is questionable. It is hard to prove that the intensity of linguistic (and cultural) influence correlates with the actual number of settlers; it has more to do with their social and political prestige and the nature of contact with the local population. Consequently, the hypothesis of intensive social and cultural contact between the Scandinavians and the local Anglo-Saxons will be strongly supported here, while the question of a secondary peasant migration will be left open, due to lack of evidence.

A further problem is posed by the above-mentioned diversity of the process of Scandinavian settlement in different parts of the Danelaw. All we can conclude is that the new settlers did have an extensive influence on the native population, and over the centuries they had occupied a large area (with various degrees of intensity), the settlement structures of which had been reorganized, according to the testimony of place-name evidence. The initial settlers clearly had political power over the local population, but how long their social and ethnic identity was preserved is uncertain. It seems reasonable to assume that cultural and religious assimilation, attestable from the early tenth century onwards on the basis of sculptural evidence, indicates a mixing with the English population from early on, which led to the establishment of Anglo-Scandinavian communities with a collective identity, strengthened by common legislation (based on Danish legal customs).

Ecclesiastical organization

One of the most often discussed indicators of the intensity of Scandinavian political, military, and cultural influence on the territories of the Danelaw is the impact of the Vikings on the organization of the church. Opinions range from the heavy destruction of ecclesiastical communities and serious disruption[10] to undisturbed continuity in several areas. Similarly to (and parallel with) the diverse nature of Scandinavian presence in different parts of the North, the relationship between the Church and the Viking raiders, and later settlers, shows some diversity both geographically and with respect to the various types of ecclesiastical communities.

In the light of the surviving written evidence, it was the ecclesiastical organizations and monastic communities that suffered most both in the first phase of

[10] See, for example, Smyth (1999, 35): "In late tenth-century England, there would not have been need for monastic reconstruction under St. Oswald had not the Danes wiped out monasticism -- if not indeed organized Christianity altogether -- throughout the Southern Danelaw."

Viking raids and in the subsequent period of settlement. In the 880s, in his prose preface to St. Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*, King Alfred reflected upon the riches of churches throughout England "before *everything* was ransacked and burned" (Keynes and Lapidge 1983, 125; italics are mine). In areas subject to Viking raids, monastic life and episcopal hierarchy experienced severe disruptions. According to the surviving documents, several communities ceased to exist (they were slaughtered or scattered) or were forced to leave their original houses (e.g. Whitby and Jarrow in the latter part of the ninth century and the Lindisfarne community in 875), the succession of bishops were often interrupted (e.g. in Whithorn, Lindsey, Elmham, Dunwich), and much ecclesiastical property passed into lay hands. Poorer religious communities, however, seem to have been spared by the Vikings (Fletcher 1998 [1997], 371), and may have continued to be (or became) centers of local religious devotion. Anglo-Scandinavian stone monuments located in graveyards also indicate that many churches remained in use for burial through the period of Scandinavian settlement.

It would be false to think that it was the Viking impact alone that had led to the general deterioration of ecclesiastical life by the late ninth century. Asser's remarks on the reasons for the decline in the enthusiasm for monastic life suggest that "the quality of religious life in England had been affected as much by negligence and complacency as by any systematic acts of plunder perpetrated by Viking armies" (Keynes 1997, 61; also pointed out in Richards 2000 [1991], 137). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that contemporary scholars and rulers (e.g. Alcuin, Alfred, Æthelred, etc.) saw the destruction by the Vikings primarily as a consequence of the decline of the English Church, and not a reason for it. The losses suffered by the Church and the monasteries were nonetheless significant and the consequences far-reaching.

Much of the destruction was due to the Scandinavians' interest in easy access to portable treasures, rather than their aversion to Christianity. However, that fact that monasteries ceased functioning did not necessarily prevent continued existence of monastic churches as parish churches (Morris 1981, 226, relating to Jarrow and Wearmouth) or rather minster churches, with a community of clergy responsible for the pastoral care of a large area (Richards 2000 [1991], 137). Monastic land holdings passed into lay hands, often of Scandinavian origin, and thus these churches might have had an influence on the new landlords and tenants. The fragmentation of large estates during the

Viking Age led to the establishment of rural parishes and parish churches in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. Many of the new churches were founded by Scandinavian landholders who sought in them both status and a source of income. Parish priests ministered baptisms and burials in the local community and kept daily contact with the parishioners. Later Scandinavian settlers may also have been active in establishing urban churches, some of which are dedicated to the Norwegian St. Olaf (Richards 2000 [1991], 138-41).

In spite of the disruption in ecclesiastical organization, the Church has remained a potent political force in the North. Adapting well to the changing constellations of power, ecclesiastics played an important role in the politics of Scandinavian York and the Danelaw (e.g. Archbishop Wulfhere, the Cuthbert community, Archbishops Wulfstan I and II).

To sum up, we can conclude that the Scandinavians' inlfluence on the English Church was twofold. The economic difficulties and the organizational disruption of the monastic communities led to a decline in their power and wealth, and also prevented the spread of the tenth-century Benedictine Reform and cultural revival to the North. On the other hand, in consequence of the Scandinavian settlement (often on former monastic holdings), a new parish system emerged, and the late Viking period witnessed church foundations on a large scale (Richards 2000 [1991], 141). The spiritual continuity of the northern church can be seen in its success not only in surviving under the pagan influence of the Scandinavian settlers, but in converting both the Scandinavian rulers of York and the settlers in the marginal areas to Christianity.

Cultural impact: Viking influence on English art

Until the mid-ninth century northern England was a culturally united region, in spite of its political division into the sub-kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira. With the arrival of the Scandinavian settlers, this cultural unity was disturbed. More important than the political control of certain areas, the new settlers had a long-lasting cultural impact on the native population, attestable in various fields of life. The considerable influence on language, art and artistic taste, the development of towns, trade, ecomony, and agriculture point towards intensive contacts between the old and new inhabitants. For the purposes of

the present study, the Scandinavian influence on English art will be outlined briefly to demonstrate the impact of the Vikings on the native culture.[11]

Scandinavian influence on English art can be divided into three periods: (1) the pre-Viking period, characterized by contacts between the eastern parts of England and Scandinavia; (2) the period of Viking settlement from the late ninth to the late tenth century; and (3) the period of Danish succession to the English throne in the first half of the eleventh century. The second and most intensive period of Scandinavian influence is largely confined to the North, while the third phase is marked by the appearance of Scandinavian artistic elements also in the South.

Artefacts from Viking-age England are dated on the basis of Scandinavian stylistic elements imported into England, among others. The earliest influential Viking style was the Borre style, which dominated the art of the Scandinavian homeland from the mid-ninth century onwards, and is characterized by the ringchain, a cat-like mask, and types of ribbon ornament based on split bands. Pure examples of Borre style ornaments as well as insular modifications thereof were found among metalwork objects in the York area. Stone sculptures, e.g. from Gosforth (Cumbria) or Burnsall (Yorkshire), display local adaptations and developments of the ringchain in a medium unfamiliar to Scandinavians.

From the mid-ninth to the late tenth century, partly overlapping with the Borre and the later Mammen styles, Viking art was dominated by the Jellinge style, characterized by ribbon-like animals with contoured outlines and spiral hips. Even though it takes its name from a cup found at Jelling in Denmark, the Jellinge style was primarily an Anglo-Scandinavian style which flourished in the Viking settlement areas of England in the first half of the tenth century and was modified according to the local artistic taste and available material. While pure Jellinge style metalwork finds emerged from York, stone sculpture again shows the mingling of native insular and Viking traditions, e.g. in York Minster, Collingham (Yorkshire), and Middleton.

The Mammen style of the late tenth and early eleventh century is characterized by double-contoured and pelleted animals with spiral hips, lip-lappets, and small heads, and by interlaced bands. This style provides a link between the Jellinge and the Ringerike styles, and enjoyed great popularity in the Scandinavian homeland. It had little impact on

[11] Summary based on Wilson and Klindt-Jensen 1980; R. Bailey's "Scandinavian influence on English art."

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the north of England, probably due to the decline of Scandinavian political power and regular contact with the homeland, but sporadic examples appreared from London (bone plaque) and Workington (Cumbria, cross-shaft), and a larger number from the Isle of Man.

The influence of the eleventh-century Ringerike style is associated with Cnut's accession to the English throne, thus it belongs to the third phase of Scandinavian artistic influence, and is characteristic for the south of England. The most outstanding find in Ringerike style is the famous painted stone slab from St. Paul's in London, but other finds of metalwork and bone from the south also display Ringerike elements. The northern areas were not under the influence of this southern fashion; the only known northern example is a stone slab from Otley (Yorkshire). The appearance of the last and most elegant Viking style, the Urnes style, falls into the Norman period in England, thus it exceeds the time frame of the present study. Nonetheless, it indicates the continuing contact between England and Scandinavia and the sensitivity of the insular taste to Scandinavian fashion.

Viking influence on English art well demonstrates aspects of the Scandinavian-English cultural contacts in the Viking period. According to the testimony of artistic influence which shows the evolving sequence of Scandinavian art mirrored in England, the contact with the Scandinavian homeland as well as with the native population was intensive throughout the Viking period. But the influence reflected in English art was rather an impact on the insular artistic taste. Numerous adaptations and modifications of Scandinavian artistic elements according to native traditions show the creative mingling of different tastes and traditions. As far as stone sculpture is concerned, the Scandinavians enriched and revitalized the native tradition of stone carving also by introducing new subjects in iconography, imported from their homeland on perishable media (textile, wood, bone), and new art forms (e.g. hogbacks). The new elements in iconography reflect the influence of Scandinavian mythological and heroic narratives, demonstrating a deeper layer of intellectual influence on the native population, which goes beyond the fashion of styles.

It is this pagan Scandinavian intellectual heritage—which the settlers imported in the form of tales, myths, songs, and other narratives (together with their traditional visual

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in Lapidge, et. al, 2001, 406-7; Fuglesang 1986; and Wilson 1984.

representation), and which reflects their world-view and historical consciousness—that interests us in the present context. This heritage, which came in contact with the Christian culture of the Anglo-Saxons, developed into the unique culture of the Anglo-Scandinavian communities, the intellectual process of which will be the subject of the following study of stone sculpture.

Conversion and Christianization of the Scandinavian settlers

One significant impact of the Vikings on England in the ninth century was "the impetus which the raids gave to the emergence of a sense of common identity among the English peoples" (Keynes 1997, 62), an identity defined, on the one hand, by growing political unity, and on the other, by the common Christian faith, both of which were felt to be endangered by the invaders. The establishment of the Anglo-Scandinavian communities in the Danelaw and the gradual integration of the Scandinavian settlers into the recipient society, which by the end of the Anglo-Saxon period sees itself as "English," presupposed (or was the result of) the Scandinavians' adaptation of these two cornerstones of "English identity": a political unity (under the aegis of the so-called Danelaw[12]) and the acceptance of Christianity.

The conversion of the Danelaw belongs to issues of Anglo-Saxon scholarship that have produced such radically different understandings of the nature of the religion of the Scandinavian settlers, the religiosity of the native Anglo-Saxon communities, the process and result of the conversion, and the motivations thereof, that it seems almost impossible to make a statement whose opposite has not also been declared.[13] The following section will not attempt to give comprehensive answers to the great number of questions raised and to evaluate all the existing evidence, however thin it is. Its aim is only to survey the evidence other than the stone carvings, and to outline the historical, political, and institutional aspects of the conversion, which will serve as a background for the investigation of Christianization as an intellectual process which found its expression in art.

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[12] In spite of its widespread use in scholarly literature to denote the areas of Scandinavian settlement of England from the late ninth century onwards, the term 'Danelaw' does not appear in any surviving document before the eleventh century.

[13] To demonstrate the diversity of opinions, Lesley Abrams quotes a number of radically opposing views on various aspects of the conversion of the Danelaw in her article of 2001 (pp. 31 and 40).

The acceptance of Christianity as a new religion is a long process, marked by a series of public church rituals as well as by changes in the private, everyday lives of the converts. The public nature of baptism makes this stage of the process historically recordable, but tells us little about the nature of the religiosity of the converts. Following Lesley Abrams' suggestion, the terms 'conversion' and 'Christianization', which are often used interchangeably, should be distinguished to achieve clearer understanding. In this sense, 'conversion' should be used to denote "the initial transition, marked by baptism (or some other formal acceptance of Christianity) and the first stages of participation in institutional forms; 'Christianization', on the other hand, [...] to mean the process whereby Christian beliefs and practices penetrated into the converted society" (Abrams 2001, 31). There are further technical terms (e.g. accommodation, inculturation, adaptation, syncretism, etc.) used by cultural anthropologists, theologians, and ecclesiastical historians to describe forms of religious encounter. These concentrate on the degree and nature of the cultural and spiritual influence, and are thus linked to our use of the term 'Christianization'. These terms will be discussed in detail in connection with the sculptural evidence and applied to the present context in chapter 4. From a historical perspective, the distinction between conversion and Christianization should be sufficient here.

In the South the conversion of the Danes was mainly a political decision, advantageous in the long run both for the converters and the converts. The entry for the year 878 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as well as Chapter 56 of Asser's *Life of Alfred* (Keynes and Lapidge 1983, 85), document the baptism of Guthrum (or Æthelstan after his baptism [ASC 890]) and thirty of his followers, with King Alfred acting as their godfather. The merit on Alfred's side is of course not so much spiritual, although no one would dare to question the faith and zeal of such an outstanding monarch, but rather political, considering the godfather's power over his godsons, which was similar to a comitatus bond. The diplomatic significance of this step by the Danes is equally clear, but the deeper nature of the conversion remains uncertain.

It is generally accepted that the Scandinavians had shown no particular hostility towards Christianity as a religion during the invasions. Their destruction of Christian communities was politically and economically motivated, and so was their later conversion to the religion of the invaded. The difference in religion between the invaders

and the invaded was, however, clearly emphasized by the authors of ninth- and tenth-century English documents who referred to the Scandinavians as pagans.[14] Whether the term really indicated the observance of pagan practices, or rather served the ideological and political needs of the Anglo-Saxons remains unclear. The earliest Scandinavian settlers were certainly pagans (the later ones were not necessarily), but very little is known about the religion they imported, and it also remains uncertain how long they maintained their native religion and in what form.

In Northumbria the beneficial cooperation of Anglo-Saxon clergymen with the Scandinavian rulers of York (e.g. Archbishops Wulfhere, Wulfstan I and II, or the support of Guthfrith by the community of St. Cuthbert[15]) shows a diplomatic situation similar to that in the South. There is no evidence in the North of any organized evangelization of the new settlers (as opposed, for example, to Normandy and France, cf. Fletcher 1998 [1997], 388), nevertheless, surviving evidence suggests the successful and relatively rapid Christianization of the majority of the Scandinavians. How did they come into contact with Christianity? The most obvious way is through the local Anglo-Saxon population via trade contacts and family relations. The nature and intensity of the religiosity of these local communities themselves are surrounded by uncertainty. We can suppose that those monastic churches which remained intact in the Scandinavian settlement areas or were transformed into parish churches provided basic spiritual care and pastoral ministry (baptism, burial, etc.) for the neighboring lay communities which gradually incorporated the new settlers. Whether it was in these mixed communities that they first encountered Christianity is, however, uncertain, if not improbable. The Scotto-Scandinavian and Hiberno-Norse settlers of the Northwest had already been exposed to Christianity in their previous settlement areas (Scotland and the Scottish Isles, and Ireland, respectively), and they may have adopted several aspects thereof.[16] Southern England and the Scottish Isles also continued to have an influence on the conversion of Scandinavian political leaders in the northern areas (Fletcher 1998 [1997], 380): King Æthelstan probably imposed

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[14] Asser in his *Vita Alfredi* calls them *pagani*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* uses the OE term *hæþene*, and a number of tenth-century diplomas also refer to them as *pagani* (Abrams 2001, 32).

[15] The unique accession ceremony of Guthfrith, recorded in the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, presented not only a fusion of power, but also of cultural traditions: it took place on a hill and involved a golden armlet, according to Scandinavian fashion, as well as an oath sworn over St. Cuthbert's body.

[16] The mingling of the old and new traditions is well demonstrated by the grave of a Viking warrior found on the island of Colonsay in 1882. The man was buried with his horse and traditional gravegoods beneath a boat, and at each end of the enclosure there was a small stone slab incised with a cross (Fletcher 1998 [1997], 373).

baptism on Sihtric (II) in 926 (Abrams 2001, 39), and in 943 Olaf Cuaran of Dublin and York was baptized at the court of King Edmund of Wessex, and later he retired to Iona. According to the testimony of these late conversions of political leaders as well as that of sculptural evidence, the north-western areas of the Danelaw seem to have kept their pagan traditions longer than the eastern parts.

The encounters with Christianity and especially the motivations for conversion differed in the upper and lower layers of the society. For many Scandinavian leaders it was a tactical decision in order to establish themselves in a new and unstable environment, especially since the Church could offer models for kingship and the exercise of power (Hadley 1997, 94). It was also in the interest of the Church, considering the expansionist policies of Wessex towards Northumbria, which resulted in the seizure of ecclesiastical properties, the transfer of relics, and the burning of the church at Ripon by Eadred (ibid.). For a peasantry that, regardless of the total number of invaders, undoubtedly constituted a minority in most newly acquired territories, it was a natural means of social integration.

It has often been suggested that the integration and assimilation of the Scandinavian settlers was a fairly "rapid" process. The speed of conversion and assimilation is hard to measure. It is not clear whether it is the earliest evidence of the meeting and mingling of cultures, or the latest evidence of surviving paganism, or the temporal difference between them, that should be taken into account when judging the speed of this, obviously longer, process. That assimilation did take place is unquestionable, but whether a time frame of two to three generations is to be considered "rapid," needs careful evaluation. (Cf. also Abrams 2001, 37)

Direct evidence for heathen practices is missing, but pagan iconography on stone carvings suggests the survival of traditional mythical, heroic, and semi-historical narrative material, which, however, does not necessarily indicate the active practice of the pagan religion associated with it.[17] Archaeology can provide evidence both for the paganism of the Scandinavians (particularly the early settlers if early dates are accepted) and their assimilation. In comparison with the rest of England, the northern areas show the highest number of pagan Viking burials and grave finds, and several of them are associated with

[17] While the early settlers were certainly pagans, the later ones might well have been converted already before their arrival to England and had thus abandoned their pagan practices. Nevertheless, they still shared

Christian sites. It is, however, difficult to assert with any certainty that pagan Viking graves in Christian graveyards can alone prove a rapid assimilation of the Scandinavians into native Christian culture (Wilson 1967, 44-45). C.D. Morris (1981, 234-36) argues for assimilation on the basis of indirect evidence. The first one is statistical: one might expect the survival of a larger number of pagan burials if a very large number of pagan Viking graves had existed. Secondly, the dating of the finds is uncertain, but if early dates could be asserted, that would also support the assimilation theory. Thirdly, little distinctive material evidence has survived of the actual settlements of the Scandinavians outside York, which also points towards a mingling of the population. The iconography of stone carvings also suggests assimilation, and at the same time it points toward a prolific period of transition and cultural integration, which should redirect the focus of our attention from the outcome of the assimilation and conversion to its actual process.

Summing up, we can say that the conversion of the Scandinavians in England was the result not of one overreaching missionary policy or campaign, as in the case of several peoples on the Continent between the eighth and the eleventh century,[18] but a combination of three different influences and methods of conversion. We find examples of political or diplomatic conversions in both the South and the North, we can assume some rather small-scale "missionary activity" or basic spiritual care ministered by monasteries and parish churches in their own vicinities, and finally there was a direct influence of Christian culture in mixed communities. It is the third way that seems to have been characteristic for most of the north-western areas, at least in the initial phase of Christianization. These mixed communities of Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians, which provided fertile soil for the conversion, are called Anglo-Scandinavian communities, and it is to them that we turn our attention now.

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the old cultural tradition and were familiar with the traditional mythical, heroic, and semi-historical narratives.

[18] Organized missionary activity was usually the bishops' task. The lack or insufficiency of missionary activity is suggested by a surviving letter from Pope Formosus to the bishops of the Anglo-Saxon church, written between 891 and 896, in which he blamed them for having failed to act against paganism, and reminded them of their responsibilities, but also praised them for their (unspecified) instructional work (Whitelock 1979, 890-92, no. 227, cited in Abrams 2001, 36). In any case, whatever missionary activity the bishops might have initiated, several bishoprics ceased to exist temporarily or for good, and many areas lost episcopal support and control.

Anglo-Scandinavian communities

Cohabitation, intensive cultural contact, and finally the conversion of the Scandinavian settlers resulted in the formation of the so-called Anglo-Scandinavian communities (in a social, not just in a physical sense). Even though the term seems not only obvious and handy, but also necessary, a definition thereof is problematic in many ways. The term itself suggests the encounter of two ethnically and culturally distinct groups, but it also presupposes, at least to some extent, a shared identity of these peoples. The double nature of the term well describes the nature of these communities.

The birth of the Anglo-Scandinavian communities was facilitated by (in addition to political necessity) cultural convergence, which, in terms of religion, meant the gradual Christianization of the new settlers. Cohabitation also required a common means of communication. Matthew Townend (2000, 90) supports the view that speakers of Old English and Old Norse were "adequately intelligible to one another when each spoke their own language." Even though we can assume a certain degree of linguistic assimilation (which left its marks on the English language by the beginning of the Middle English period), Viking Age England was a bilingual society dominantly made up of monolingual speakers of two different languages (Townend 2000, 89-105).

The term 'Anglo-Scandinavian communities' should therefore stand for those communities which after the period of conquest and first encounters had already achieved a certain degree of cultural and social integration and developed a feeling of common identity defined by the political and legal framework, but where elements of the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon traditions and cultures (language, artistic styles, narrative material, etc.) were still distinct to some extent. The gradual cultural convergence which took place in these communities from the mid-ninth to the mid-eleventh century ultimately resulted in the assimilation of the conquerors into the culture of the conquered, and the formation of an "English" identity.

Conversion and assimilation as intellectual process

The study of the conversion and assimilation of the Scandinavian settlers has so far concentrated largely on its chronology, its political, social, and economic background and consequences, and its influence on various aspects of English culture, from language through literature to artistic production, that is, on the circumstances and outcome of this

process. However, conversion, Christianization, and cultural assimilation are primarily intellectual processes, and therefore the surviving evidence should be re-evaluated in order to uncover traits of this intellectual process. The following study of Viking-age stone carvings will explore the initial readiness and intellectual creativity that enabled this process. It will examine the documentation of the "middle phases" of Christianization: not the question of the initial encounter, nor the final outcome, but rather the nature and stages of cultural and religious adaptation.

3. THE CORPUS: VIKING-AGE STONE CARVINGS WITH PAGAN ICONOGRAPHY

General overview of Viking-age stone carvings

The corpus of pre-Conquest stone monuments constitutes one of the richest corpora of Anglo-Saxon art. Earlier stone sculpture was essentially a monastic art form, thus it was limited in distribution as well as in form and iconography. The walls of Anglo-Saxon monasteries were decorated with stone friezes and panels, the relics of saints were laid in stone shrines, free-standing crosses were erected as objects of contemplation at sacred sites, and the graves of the deceased were marked with slabs or crosses. In the Viking period stone sculpture became a largely secular medium, serving the needs and reflecting the taste of the new settlers, yet maintaining certain links with its ecclesiastical origin mostly in terms of form, iconography, and often the location of the stones (in churchyards and monastic enclosures, often with pre-Viking sculptural production).

The majority of Viking-age stone sculptures belong to the group of free-standing monuments (crosses, slabs, grave markers, hogbacks[19]), and are located in Yorkshire, Northumberland, Cumbria, Lancashire, Derbyshire, and Lincolnshire. Viking-age sculpture is not restricted to the Danelaw, however. The greatest concentration of Viking-age sculpture (48 crosses) we find on the Isle of Man, and further examples are known, for example, from Gloucester (St. Oswald's Priory), Wiltshire (Ramsbury), and Gloucestershire (Bibury), which indicates the spreading of Scandinavian styles and taste in the southern areas as well.

The difficulty in studying pre-Norman stone sculpture lies in the fact that the majority of the monuments survive in fragmented form and rather worn state. Judging by the quality of the surviving pieces, we are led to suppose that many other pieces may have been destroyed for various reasons throughout the centuries or were reused in later buildings. The present condition of the surviving pieces is misleading in two ways. On the one hand, their often fragmentary nature creates a difficulty in trying to reconstruct the iconographical program of the original monuments, or even to determine the meaning of

[19] Recumbent carved stone funerary monuments of ca. 1.5 m in length, named after their arched form resembling bow-sided halls. They are concentrated in North Yorkshire and Cumbria (areas of Hiberno-Norse influence) and dated to the tenth century. (Cf. Lang 1967; 1972-74; 1984)

some carvings. On the other hand, as Richard Bailey has convincingly demonstrated in his 1995 Toller Memorial Lecture (Bailey 1996b), some of the monuments appeared very different to the eyes of the contemporary audience: they were covered with gesso and paint of various colors (red, black, blue, green, orange) as well as with secondary attachments, such as metal pieces, glass, paste, and jewels, in order to recall the characteristics of other media, such as metalwork. These decorations applied to the crudely cut carved stone surface could add additional iconographical details or inscriptions to the carved patterns, or conceal or highlight certain elements, which had an impact on the overall iconography as well as the reception of the monuments.

But studying stone sculpture also has advantages from an archaeological point of view. As it has already been pointed out earlier, stone monuments are fairly immobile artifacts, thus their present locations largely coincide with the original place of manufacturing and display. Therefore, we can deduce some information about the relationship of certain geographical regions and local workshops, the distribution of motifs, and to some extent the types of cultural and ethnic communities in areas with surviving sculptural material.

Dating and Chronology

The dating of Viking-age stone monuments poses special problems for scholars, since there are only very few fixed points that we can rely on. The only external evidence is the Viking invasion and settlement of the northern areas in the second half of the ninth and early part of the tenth century, as it is documented in historical sources, and even that does not represent a clear-cut break, since several areas show a continuation of the Anglian tradition. Therefore, the dating of Viking-age sculpture has been based largely on stylistic evidence. The evolution of Viking artistic styles can be dated on the basis of circumstantial evidence in Scandinavia, however, in many cases we have a longer period of overlap between two stylistic periods, which makes it difficult to suggest more than a relative chronology for insular sculptures. Another problem is the uncertainty of the date of arrival, the intensity and regional diversification of the influence of Viking styles imported from Scandinavia, and the degree of their local adaptation and modification. Since the majority of Viking-age sculptures in England are either free-standing monuments or fragments reused in later churches, a dating by contextual relationship and

circumstantial evidence is often impossible. Instead of assigning particular dates, it seems more accurate to establish local chronologies observing regional differences and characteristics.

Recent scholarship on the dating of Viking-age carvings has suggested a relatively short period of intense production, from the late ninth to the mid-tenth century, based on the very limited appearance of late Viking artistic styles (Mammen and Ringerike) (Lang 1983, 186). The different regions of the North however show some variation within this general time frame. It is the Isle of Man that shows the longest period of production, ca. 930-1020 (or already from ca. 900), and it was from there that certain iconographical and ornamental elements (e.g., the Sigurd legend, the "hart and hound" motif, the Bound Evil) were imported to the northwestern coastal areas (Cumbria and Lancashire) and then further to Yorkshire. Most of the Yorkshire monuments were carved in the first half of the tenth century, that is not in the initial phase of Scandinavian settlement, but during the period of strong Hiberno-Norse influence. The majority of the Derbyshire crosses can be dated to 910-950, while most of the Lincolnshire crosses are of a slightly later date, from 950 to 1000, and had been derived from Hiberno-Norse prototypes in Yorkshire, north-west England, and the Isle of Man (Bailey 1978 and 1980, 213; Lang 1978; Bailey and Lang 1975; Stocker 2000, 191-92, Richards 2000 [1991], 162).

Artists and patrons

There was probably more than one craftsman involved in the production of a carved stone: the carver himself, a painter, and maybe even a designer. With the exception of a few memorial rune stones, the names of the artists did not survive,[20] and even in those few cases when names are noted, it is hard to distinguish between the maker and the commissioner of the monument. The role of the patrons or commissioners in the actual production of the carvings is unclear; besides subsidizing the production financially, they might have also been responsible for or involved in the design to some extent. In the past decades, local workshops (often referred to as schools) and individual artists have been identified by their carving techniques, choice of motifs and patterns, and their repeated use of templates. We may assume that many craftsmen were itinerant, especially stone carvers whose products were non-portable (Foote and Wilson 1974

[20] An often mentioned exception is the stone carver Gautr from the Isle of Man.

[1970], 318), thus the sphere of activity of one carver or workshop could cover a large area. Accordingly, the main regional schools or workshops of the Viking period were located in the York metropolitan area, the coastal areas of north-west Cumbria, Ryedale, the Tees Valley, Lincolnshire, and the Peak District area of Derbyshire.

Since many of the stones were found at locations where pre-Viking production of stone monuments can also be attested, we may assume a continuity in the activity of local masters or workshops under new patronage. With the coming of the Viking settlers, especially after 920, the patronage of stone monuments shifted from the ecclesiastical to the secular, and a new taste developed for warrior portraits and lay persons. However, ecclesiastical patronage did not cease to exist totally. Some monuments continued the Anglian tradition of ecclesiastical patronage, e.g. the large cross at Stonegrave, or the cross shaft in Leeds parish church (Lang 1978, 18). Sites without evidence of pre-Viking Anglo-Saxon work indicates the expansion of sculptural production, which corresponds to the changes in ecclesiastical organization, the decline of monastic patronage, and the transfer of resources to a new secular aristocracy (Richards 2000 [1991], 159-60). David Stocker (2000) has shown that in tenth-century Lincolnshire and Yorkshire the distribution of sculpted burial monuments corresponds to new parochial foundations and points towards the involvement of single lords and their families (and in a distinct sub-group of sites at trading places that of elite traders). This secular patronage opened the way to secular influence on these previously primarily ecclesiastical monuments.

The majority of the Viking-age carvings are funerary or commemorative monuments. The decoration, iconography, and sometimes even the form of these monuments are derived from Scandinavian (or Hiberno-Norse) prototypes, which indicates either the presence of settlers of Viking origin, or the desire of indigenous individuals or families to associate themselves with Anglo-Scandinavian culture. The high costs of production (the costs of the monumental stone itself and of its carving and decoration) as well as the distinction that it conferred on the deceased suggest that many of them were exclusive monuments of an elite (cf. Stocker 2000, 180). In most cases only one or two of these monuments have survived at a given location, associated with burials of the founders of the churchyard, church, and manor, while the accumulation of a larger number of stones points towards the presence of an enlarged Anglo-Scandinavian elite of traders at tenth-century trading centers.

The social significance of Viking-age stone carvings lies in the public nature of these monuments, and necessarily presupposes a larger community of recipients. As opposed to the majority of ecclesiastical art objects (including manuscripts) directed to the eyes of God or a restricted community, these carvings were meant to reach and be understandable for the general public. This new orientation and the needs of the new audience are reflected in a change in the iconography of stone carvings in the Viking period and the appearance of monuments with secular and pagan iconography.

Monuments with secular and pagan iconography

Carvings with secular and pagan iconography constitute only a small percentage of the surviving corpus of Viking-age stone sculpture, but the total number of these carvings and their relatively wide geographical distribution suggests that we are not dealing with a unique local phenomenon. The meager corpus probably indicates a low number of originals on the one hand, and a poor survival rate on the other, which should not surprise us, considering the "unorthodox" nature of the iconography of these carvings. Since the majority of pre-Conquest carvings only survive in fragments, often reused in later architectural context, we may assume that some of the original monuments might have contained similar iconography, but with the decline of the cultural communities that produced them, they fell victim to later generations who preferred to (re)use the more traditional (and for them meaningful) carvings as decorative architectural panels in later church buildings.

The study of carvings with pagan (mythological and heroic) iconography poses a number of further difficulties in addition to the ones already mentioned above. The main difficulty is that these insular carvings are earlier than the surviving (largely Scandinavian) literary sources and come from a different region, therefore it is difficult to identify certain scenes. Related to that is the problem that some carvings may represent isolated examples, in which case no comparative material exists at all. The representation of pagan gods and scenes is further complicated by the lack of the notion of "standardized" iconography, that is the conventionalized and consequent use of attributes and depiction patterns, which characterizes Christian art from early on. And last but not least, in the case of intended parallels between pagan and Christian themes it is hard to determine the borderline, that is to identify particular scenes as pagan or secular, as

opposed to Christian, since in some cases we might have a borrowing of a common iconographical pattern from one cultural tradition and its reinterpretation in the other.

In spite of these difficulties, however, monuments with pagan and secular iconography can provide us with unique information of various kinds. On the one hand, they record earlier insular (or rather Anglo-Scandinavian) forms of myths, legends, and saga material otherwise only surviving in later Scandinavian literary sources. On the other, they indicate the cultural interest as well the artistic taste of the Anglo-Scandinavian communities and bear witness to the integration process which brought together peoples of different cultural backgrounds.

The carvings demonstrate various forms or levels of this integration process. The most obvious proof of the fact that these monuments were produced in mixed communities is the use of Scandinavian stylistic and iconographical elements in a medium (stone) scarcely used by the settlers in their homeland,[21] but well-established among the Anglo-Saxons. The Scandinavian contribution to the development of insular stone carving was threefold. The new settlers introduced Viking styles popular in contemporary Scandinavia, contributed to the birth of a new type of monument, the hogback, and enriched insular iconography with pagan elements. These iconographical elements must have reached England on perishable media (wood, bone, or textile), thus their transference to stone can be seen as a form of artistic integration, and also the emergence of a new artistic taste.

The explicitness of the relationship between the Scandinavian and the Anglo-Saxon (Christian) material varies greatly in the corpus. Two main groups need to be distinguished first: (a) carvings with secular and (b) those with identifiable mythological and heroic legendary scenes. Secular images in this context are horsemen, warriors, other male and female figures, as well as serpents and dragons, which show Scandinavian influence in their designs but are not clearly identifiable as mythological or heroic characters.[22] The function of these figural elements is either commemorative or

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[21] Even though runes stones were popular in several parts of Scandinavia, no figural stone carving survives before the end of the tenth century. The Gotland picture stones (cf. Lindquist 1941) constitute an unique corpus in this respect. Iconographical parallels between the Gotland and the northern English carvings is the result not of direct contact between these two areas, but of the existence of independent traditions of stone carving in both areas which preserved visual representation circulating in perishable media (wood and bone carving, tapestry) and metalwork.

[22] There is of course some arbitrariness involved in this distinction. Since our knowledge of the mythological material is fairly restricted, we *have to* assume that an image is secular if we cannot recognize a myth behind it.

decorative. The majority of these stones served as grave markers or commemorative stones, and it is their (mostly cruciform) shapes, their locations, and sometimes accompanying elements of Christian iconography that provide us with a possible Christian context. What this group testifies is social integration with an adaptation of Christian commemorative and burial practices, which is supported also by archaeological evidence.[23] Of course, this is not necessarily proof of the conversion of the Scandinavians, but it certainly indicates their acquaintance with the native practices and an approval and acceptance of them.

The second group contains monuments with mythological and heroic iconography. The carvings can be organized around a handful of topics, which suggests a strong interest in or even fashion of particular themes and narratives and the total neglect of others. The depicted topics include, in an approximate order of frequency, the story of Weland the smith, Sigurd and the Völsung legend, Ragnarök and related scenes, various representations of evil (the Midgard serpent, Fenrir the wolf, the Bound Evil, etc.), Odin, and the Yggdrasil. A few of these monuments display an iconographical program where pagan and Christian elements are consciously combined, which makes them particularly interesting in the present context. The evidence value of these artifacts goes beyond that of social and artistic integration, and indicates the interest in and the reception of a new (or at least partly new) narrative material introduced by the Scandinavian settlers, and the intellectual process of integration and religious accommodation.

Guidelines for the survey of evidence

In the following this latter group, the corpus of Viking-age carvings with mythological and heroic iconography, will be surveyed and discussed in detail, organized into thematic groups. The first two sections will concentrate on the heroic figures of Weland and Sigurd, while the remaining five will discuss mythological figures and narratives and their representations in stone carving.

Each section starts with an introduction to sources and comparative material. Of course, there was no general, codified heathen faith all over the Germanic world; what we understand under Germanic mythology is a colorful fan of regional varieties. Therefore, any comparative material, literary or visual, can only be regarded as a starting point for

[23] The distribution of Viking graves found in Northern England also supports the idea that the new settlers

identifying the myths in general, but not the details of the stories. Since no narrative written records on mythology survive from Viking-age northern England, we have to rely on non-insular evidence. This comes mainly from thirteenth-century Iceland and Norway, which were already christianized areas at that point. The Scandinavian material can only be regarded as indirect evidence because of the temporal and geographical differences, and should therefore be handled with care.

After a general introduction to the sources and comparative material, each monument is described and discussed individually. Following the system of the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, each artifact is referred to by its current location, a number assigned in the Corpus (if applicable), the type of the monument, and its date. The locations of the monuments are indicated according to pre-1974 county boundaries (i.e., East, West, and North Riding in Yorkshire), because that is how they are usually referred to in the scholarly literature. In order to make it easier to locate places (many of them being small villages with common names) the Ordnance Survey grid numbers are also indicated.[24] The chapters conclude with a discussion of the possible function and reception of the given heroic or mythological character, theme, or narrative in the Anglo-Scandinavian communities, based on the sculptural evidence presented.

As far as the names of the pagan gods and heroes are concerned, I use the most common Modern English versions of the Scandinavian names, or as they are most commonly referred to in scholarly literature on Anglo-Saxon England. Using either the original Old Norse or the (various) Old English names would be misleading, since we cannot fully equate these characters and their stories with those known from Scandinavia (in spite of the Scandinavian origin of the settlers) or with their earlier insular counterparts.

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often utilized the sacred burial grounds of the local Christian population. Cf. (among others) Wilson 1967.

[24] For monuments included in the published volumes of the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, the grid numbers indicate the actual location of the monuments. For those not yet published, the grid numbers refer to the center of the town or village where the monument is to be found today, thus they indicate approximate locations (marked as 'ca.').

Monuments according to subject

WELAND

Sources and analogues: Pre-Viking evidence

The majority of the pagan iconographical representations surviving from Viking-age England are centered around two characters of the Scandinavian (Germanic) narrative tradition: Weland the smith and Sigurd the dragon-slayer. In spite of their associations with various races of mythical creatures and their central positions in the pagan Scandinavian tradition, Weland and Sigurd are, technically (or philologically) speaking, not mythological characters, but characters of the heroic tradition. The rest of the figures and stories of pagan Germanic origin represented on Viking-age carvings are gods and mythical characters "proper." It is doubtful, however, that a strict philological categorization would be sensitive enough to the status of these narratives in the Anglo-Scandinavian communities, considering the on-going process of demythologization and historization (euhemerism) which had led to the accommodation of these stories and characters in a Christian framework of thought.

The story of Weland[25] the smith was one of the most widespread legends of the Germanic heritage, as it is indicated by the wide geographical and chronological scope of sources from Scandinavia to Anglo-Saxon England. It is hardly surprising that the iconographical and literary records show serious discrepancies on the level of the narrative structure of the story, which suggest a constant re-formation of the myth and the co-existence of a number of regional varieties. Due to the lack of Viking-age written sources from England, it is necessary and unavoidable to draw on Scandinavian and on pre-Viking insular sources to understand the sculptural evidence discussed below, even if we are aware of the regional and temporal differences.

The earliest and most important literary sources of the Weland-myth [26] are the Old Icelandic *Völundarkviða* of the *Poetic Edda*, the Old English elegiac poem *Deor*, and the so-called Velent-episode of the West Norse *Þidreks saga*.[27] It has become a generally accepted scholarly tradition to take the *Völundarkviða* as the primary source and starting

[25] ON *Völundr*; OE *Weland/Welund*; West Norse *Velent*; ModHG *Wieland*; ModE *Wayland*.

[26] There are some minor pieces of evidence in later Middle High German, Middle Low German, Danish, and French sources which are, however, marginal for the present argumentation and should therefore be neglected. For a summary and discussion of these sources see Nedoma 1988.

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point for our understanding of the Weland-legend. The *Völundarkviða*, which survives in the Codex Regius of the *Poetic Edda* (GKS 2365, 4to; northwest of Iceland, around 1270) and fragmentarily in the manuscript AM 748 I, 4to, is not only the oldest surviving literary record from Scandinavia, probably going back to an even earlier written source, but it is also the only full narrative representation of the Weland-myth, even if it is complex and enigmatic at many places. Together with the Velent-episode of the *Þidreks saga,* the *Völundarkviða* serves as a necessary background to understand the Anglo-Saxon tradition, yet a "Scandinavianized interpretation" of the Old English sources should, of course, be avoided.

Deor

The earliest known literary source of the legend of Weland is the Old English elegiac poem *Deor*, which survives in the Exeter Book (Exeter Cathedral, MS 3501, fols. 100a-100b; second half of the 10th c.). The time of composition of the text is uncertain. Malone suggests a date around 950 and sees the text as an incompletely West-Saxonized variant of an Anglian poem (Malone 1977, 3-8). The story of Weland (or Welund, as he is named in the poem) is mentioned in the first two stanzas of the poem, and it is presented as an example of personal misery from Weland's as well as Beadohild's point of view. The source of *Deor* was probably a local variant of the Weland-story without any secondary Northern influence from the Viking Age, as it is (also) reflected in the use of the clearly Anglo-Saxon variants of the names. Nevertheless, the elegiac poem offers no continuous narrative representation. Obviously it wished to activate the audience's detailed knowledge of the myth with the help of allusions to the plot, which are however insufficient to reconstruct the narrative context.

Two of the most often debated and emended *hapax legomena* of the text contain allusions to this lost context. The enigmatic expression *be wurman* in line 1a is usually explained with one of the following four suggestions (cf. Malone 1977, 6-7; Nedoma 1988, 80-83; etc.): (1) Weland was thrown into a snake pit as a form of punishment (the so called *ormgarðr*-motive). (2) The expression is to be understood as a heiti for 'sword' or 'ring', referring to the immediate surroundings of the smith, i.e. his own works of art. (3) The phrase is a heiti for 'sword' as the instrument of Weland's hamstringing; and

[27] The following overview of the pre-Viking evidence of the Weland-myth is largely taken from Kopár

finally (4) *Wurman* (capitalized) should be read as the name of one of Niðhad's warriors who hamstrung the smith. However, none of these suggestions is really convincing. On the basis of external linguistic evidence, we can even question the correct reading of the phrase as *be wurman*, suggesting that the word *wurman*, traditionally interpreted as a late West Saxon form of OE *wyrm* (masc. i-noun meaning 'serpent, worm'), may have been miscopied from *wifmen*,[28] and thus the sentence reads: "Welund got to know exile through a woman." This reading opens up the way for a group of new suggestions around a female figure. The most evident solution is to interpret this female character as Niðhad's wife, as she is the one who initiates Weland's hamstringing (Vkv. 17, 7-10).[29] According to the *Völundarkviða*, she is a *kunnig kván* 'wise wife' (16, 1-2; 30, 1-2), where the word *kunnig* implies a kind of magical, even demonic knowledge, making her a counterpart figure to Weland. It is interesting to note her remark on Weland, expressing her fear of the elvish smith which results in her command of Weland's hamstringing:

> *Ámon ero augo ormi(!) þeim enom frána.* (Vkv. 17, 5-6)
> [His eyes remind one of the glittering serpent(!).]

Maybe it is no coincidence that after Weland's vengeance on the princes she receives gems made of the princes' *eyes*.[30] (Vkv. 25, 9-12 = 35, 5-8)

A second expression indicating a difference between the Anglo-Saxon poem and the Eddic narrative is Weland's fettering by *seonebende* 'sinew-bonds' in line 6. The word

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1999, 411-16.

[28] The emendation is based on the fact that the OE word for 'serpent' occurs in its usual form *wyrm* seven times in *Soul and Body II* (lines 22, 67, 79, 106, 110, 117 and 119), which is the text before *Deor* in the manuscript by the same hand. (North 1997, 166; based on Ursula Dronke's suggestion)

[29] Line references to the *Poetic Edda* as well as the Modern English translations are based on Ursula Dronke's edition of 1997.

[30] Considering the symbolic meaning of the face/head, it is probably more than a mere coincidence that the queen gets a jewel made of eyes (a symbol of knowledge) and Beadohild, Weland's bride (Vkv. 33,9) and the mother of his son, receives one made of teeth (a symbol of protection). Furthermore, the use of these two parts of the princes' bodies in Weland's vengeance seems to be an allusion to the queen's fearful remark on Weland:

> *Tenn hánom teygiaz, er hánom er tét sverð,*
> *ok hann Böðvildar baug um þekkir!*
> *Ámon er augo ormi þeim enom frána.* (Vkv. *17, 1-6)*
>
> [His teeth(!) are tempted when the sword is displayed in his sight,
> and he recognizes Böðvildr's ring!
> His eyes(!) remind one of the glittering serpent.]

unifies the scenes of fettering and hamstringing which are clearly separated in the *Völundarkviða.*

Another aspect which should be noted is the parallel drawn between the fates of Weland and Beadohild without establishing a common context or an explicit relation between the two, i.e. naming Weland as the cause of Beadohild's misfortune. Personal misery becomes the thematic core of the story as opposed to the primarily revenge-and-escape-plot of the Scandinavian sources.

Franks Casket

The oldest piece of evidence for the importance of the Weland-myth in Anglo-Saxon England is the Franks Casket, an ivory jewel box which was carved in Northumbria around 700. It contains, along with runic inscriptions in Northumbrian dialect, iconographical representations of Germanic, Classical, and biblical stories according to an overall iconographical program unparalleled in the antique tradition (Hauck and Krause 1973, 514). Although the left side of the front panel bears no runic inscription, it has with great certainty been identified as a depiction of the Weland legend.[31] The picture is traditionally divided into three parts expressing a temporal succession of the events. I would, however, rather suggest a division in four scenes (the headless corpse; Weland and Beadohild; the second female figure; the bird-catching-scene) and put less emphasis on chronology. Although the interpretation of certain scenes is by no means evident, it is possible to provide a narrative succession reading the picture from the left towards the right side.

The male figure on the left is unquestionably Weland, the crippled smith. In his pliers he is holding the head of a prince whose headless corpse is under the anvil. The female figure on the left is Beadohild, the future victim of the second revenge, who is giving Weland an object interpreted either as the broken ring which is to be repaired or a cup containing beer. The second female figure, carrying a basket with a bottle in it, is often associated with the maid known only from the *Þidreks saga.*[32] It might seem unusual to use a 13th-century Norwegian text to explain an iconographical source from

[31] The first interpreters of the panel falsely identified it as the biblical scene of the beheading of John the Baptist. (Becker 1973, 78)

[32] Nedoma (1990) rejects this interpretation emphasizing the temporal difference between Franks Casket and the saga, and also questioning the depiction of such a marginal character. Hauck (1977), on the other

8th-century Northumbria, yet the idea should not seem so strange if we consider that the saga is based on a now lost Low German source which in its basic narrative patterns might have stood closer to the Anglo-Saxon version than the Eddic lay. The saga can also be great help for us when trying to understand the iconographical mark of the leaf ornaments next to the head of the second female figure. Building up a motivic chain connecting the four scenes, we may interpret these ornaments as the frame of a winged suit, Weland's flying device. According to this chain of iconographical elements, scene (1), the headless body of the prince is connected with scene (2), Weland and Beadohild, by the head in the pliers, which again is connected with scene (3), the lady with the bottle, through the cup of beer. The leaf ornaments, which also belong to the maid(?)-scene, serve, therefore, as a connecting element to scene (4), the male figure catching birds. It would seem logical to read this scene as Weland's brother, Egill, the master bowman, collecting feathers for his brother's flying device, as documented in the *Þidreks saga.* However, there are two arguments which oppose this interpretation: (a) The figure does not resemble in its iconographical representation the *Ægili* of the lid of the casket; and (b) wringing birds' necks is at variance with the basic characteristic feature of a master bowman. As the hunting of birds was a typical occupation for boys (Jiriczek 1898, 1,19f, cited in Nedoma 1990, 141), the male figure strangling birds can also be interpreted as one of Niðhad's sons. This reading would create a link between scenes (4) and (1), thus closing the circle and rounding up the composition. Dissolving the narrative succession into a simultaneous picture while keeping a certain scenic division disregards the primacy of chronology and puts an emphasis on shared elements between different scenes. This concept of time and narrative organizing principle will be examined later in greater detail in chapter 5.

As for the main theme of the Weland legend depicted on the Franks Casket, we may suggest a story which is primarily one of revenge, yet considering the thematic organizing principle of the front panel as well as the whole casket, Weland's craftsmanship and his precious works of art gain special significance. The same artistic feature of Weland's character is also alluded to in *Deor*, where he constitutes the counterpart of the poet himself: both of them are artists who had/have to suffer calamities because of their lords.

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hand, suggesting a general iconographical program applied for the whole casket, interprets the second

In other Anglo-Saxon poetic works Weland's name is mentioned in connection with weapons and armor of special worth and artistic value (*Waldere* I,2; *Beowulf* 455 and 1681), which might indicate that his character was turned more and more into an abstract person of the archetypal craftsman (Nedoma 1990, 133). This idea is reinforced by King Alfred's use of Weland's name when offering an etymological interpretation of *Fabricius* (Latin *faber* meaning 'craftsman, smith') in his translation of Boethius' *De consolatio philosophiae*.

Two Anglo-Saxon place names (*Welandes smiðde* (Berkshire) and *Welandes stocc* (Buckinghamshire)) and the numerous folk legends connected with these places bear witness to Weland's association also with supernatural beings (elves, dwarfs or giants) and the underworld among the Anglo-Saxons (cf. Davidson 1958).

Pre-Conquest stone monuments

The evidence of pre-Conquest carvings from Northern England points towards the interest of the Anglo-Scandinavians in a further thematic aspect of the Weland-legend, namely the magical flight of the smith. The surviving carvings form two iconographically distinguishable groups. The two monuments from Leeds (now in the Parish Church and in Leeds Museum), two from Sherburn (nos. 2 and 3), and a fragment from Bedale (no. 6) all display different parts of the same iconographical pattern: a human figure bound in a flying contrivance, while the remaining evidence features winged figures of various iconographical patterns unrelated to that of the first group.

Group I

Leeds, West Riding (ca. SE 305345), Parish Church, cross shaft [10th c.]

The much-traveled cross[33] of 2.59 m [fig. 1], now standing in the parish church of Leeds, displays the most complete surviving version of the "man in the flying contrivance" composition. In the lowest panel of the front side of the cross (now facing

female figure as Weland's valkyrie helping him in his revenge.

[33] Broken pieces of the cross, together with a number of other fragments, were found in 1838 when rebuilding the Parish Church. R.D. Chantrell, the architect hired for the rebuilding, assembled the cross from the pieces and set it up in his garden at Oatlands House. When he left Leeds, he took the cross with him. He lived in various parts of the country, and the cross moved with him for 18 years. Eventually Chantrell retired to Rottingdean in 1863. After Chantrell's death in 1875, John Gott, the Vicar of Leeds, obtained title to the cross, but the sale of Chantrell's house prevented his recovering the monument. Finally the cross was purchased for £25 by Gott, transported to Leeds by train in 1877 ,and erected in the Parish Church in 1880 (Browne 1885, 131-33, Bailey 1980, 23, and McGuire and Clark 1987, 6-9).

south) a human figure is depicted with arms and legs outstretched. His body is encircled by a large band and his two arms and the one well-visible leg are bound by bars and loops to a contrivance with two large wings and a bird's tail. Above his head, the figure is grabbing a horizontally positioned female figure by her hair and dress. At the bottom of the panel four or five instruments are scattered at the feet of the figure, which have been identified as the tools of a smith. It was Bishop G.F. Browne who first identified this pattern as Weland in his flying contrivance, and suggested that the scene depicted his carrying off a swan-maiden whom he married (1885, 139). In light of further details of the same composition preserved on the other carvings discussed below, James Lang (1976, 90-91) identified the scene with the help of a detail of the Gotland picture stone Ardre VIII (discussed below) as Weland's escape after his revenge.

The winged Weland is accompanied by panels showing probably evangelists with cloaks and winged symbols (Bailey 1981), two on the front and two on the rear side of the cross.[34] The two narrow sides as well as the front side contain interlace patterns of Anglian and Scandinavian styles.

Leeds, West Riding (ca. SE 305345), City Museum, cross shaft [10th c.]

The fragmentary cross shaft in Leeds City Museum (Museum Stone 4 in McGuire and Clark 1987, 25) [fig. 2] shows an almost identical iconographical pattern, although there we only have one wing, the feathered tail, and the lower part of the human figure left. The missing head and the upper part of the design was reconstructed by Collingwood (1927, 162, fig. 194) on the basis of the other Leeds cross, and it can be confirmed by comparison to a carved stone fragment from Sherburn (no. 3, see below), where we find the head of the human figure in the winged contrivance combined with that of a bird.

The rest of the highly fragmented cross probably displayed an iconography similar to that of the other Leeds cross. If we can trust Collingwood's reconstruction of the

[34] The lowest panel of the other broad side (north) of the cross (corresponding to the Weland panel) is especially puzzling: it displays a cloaked figure with a sword in his right hand, a bird on or above his shoulder, and a looped interlace pattern in front of him. The figure has been variously interpreted as Sigurd (Bishop Browne 1885, 11ff), the person commemorated by the cross (Collingwood 1915, 303ff), Odin (Davidson 1969, 218), or another portayal of Weland (Lang in private communication, cf. McGuire and Clark 1987, 14), and an (extremely unconvincing) parallel has even been suggested with Elijah (McGuire and Clark 1987, 15). A secular interpretation of the figure seems probable, thus Collingwood's suggestion, i.e. the depiction of the person commemorated, seems to be most convincing. The bird and the sword might suggest that he was a warrior associated with Odin's cult, while the Weland panel on the other side might indicate that he was also a craftsman or a patron, but these are only unproven hypotheses.

fragments (1927, 162, fig. 194), the broad side with the Weland design (probably the principal side of the cross) displayed two human figures, maybe ecclesiastics, in the two upper panels, while the other three sides contained Scandinavian-style interlace.

Sherburn 2, East Riding (SE 959775), cross shaft fragment [late 9th to late 10th c.]

A fragment of a cross-shaft in Sherburn, dated to the late ninth to late tenth century and now located in the church tower, displays a winged motif that could also be related to the Weland iconography presented above. On side A (broad) a triangular, feathered tail-end and parts of the two wings of a bird-like motif are depicted in a stylized way [fig. 3]. The creature is in an upward moving position, and has below its tail the very top of a semicircular human head with what seems to be a dished halo. The side C (broad) is badly worn and encrusted with mortar (Collingwood dismissed it as "defaced" (1911, fig. g on 272; also cited Lang 1991, 202). It shows "an enlaced profile beast, possibly interlocked with another. It is bound by its extended ear and an incised fetter which loops in front of its chest. The jaws are short and agape." (Lang 1991, 202) The narrow sides (B and D) each contain runs of interlace.

The fragment shows close resemblance to Sherburn 3 in iconography and style, however, the two fragments do not constitute parts of the same original because of the dissimilarity of the interlace patterns on the narrow sides. The fragmentary iconographical pattern of a bird-like creature resembles the depictions on the Leeds cross shafts as well as on the Sherburn fragment no. 3. The dished halo is a ninth-century Anglian feature, while the Jellinge-style beasts point to a tenth-century context (Lang 1991, 202), also illustrating the fruitful mingling of two iconographical traditions in Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture. The shape of the Jellinge beast indicates that the Sherburn workshop had a more south- and westward orientation (e.g. York), which is also supported by the iconographical connection with Leeds, as opposed to the expected influence of the geographically more immediate Middleton tradition (Lang 1991, 202). The stylistic orientation was also accompanied by an interest in the narrative of Weland and its iconography, but the haloed saint clearly indicates a version of the myth adapted to Christianity. (More about the possible ways of reinterpretation, see below.)

Sherburn 3, East Riding (SE 959775), cross shaft fragment [late 9th to late 10th c.]

Sherburn no. 3, dated to the late ninth to the late tenth century, is a fragment from the middle of a cross-shaft, and shows considerable resemblance to Sherburn 2 in iconography and style. It is side A (broad) [fig. 4] which displays an elongated, frontal human face with round eyes and a large nose, surrounded by an arch which terminates in a bird's head on the top and thus indicates the body of a large, bird-like creature. The upward looking bird is holding a horizontal female figure in its beak, gripping her by her waist. The train of her long dress and her pigtail with a characteristic knot are gripped by the human figure reaching upwards. The other three sides are badly damaged, but they probably contained interlace patterns.

By resemblance to the design known from Leeds, the motif has been identified as showing Weland the smith in his flying contrivance (Lang 1976, 90-91). The female figure is probably Beadohild, but other suggestions have also been put forward (discussion see below).

Bedale 6, North Riding (SE 265884), hogback fragment [first half of 10th c.]

Side A (long) of the hogback fragment from Bedale, dated to the first half of the tenth century, displays the horizontal image of a human figure bound in a flying contrivance with two triangular wings and a fan-like tail [fig. 5]. The man's legs and body are clearly visible and are bound in interlocked rings. The head and one of the arms are missing. The iconography of this depiction shows close resemblance to the images from Leeds and Sherburn described above, thus it is with certainty Weland in his flying contrivance (Lang 1976).

Side B (end) of the fragment [fig. 6] also contains a figural scene which might be of significance in the present context. It depicts "a group of figures, the central one seated in a chair with large bossed terminals. One of the flanking figures may carry a ring and in the lap of the seated figure is a crescent-shaped object." (Lang 2001, 62) James Lang (2001, 62) suggested a possible relation of this scene to the Weland myth too, although no representation of this kind related to the story of Weland is known to us, and it is hard to imagine which particular episode it might depict. As a Christian reading, the Epiphany has been put forward (ibid.). Parallel with the iconographical program of the Franks Casket, we might suggest the Adoration of the Magi as a further possible interpretation,

although the arrangement of the figures would be rather unusual. Unfortunately, the worn state of the carving makes it impossible to interpret the scene with any certainty. On side C (long) two serpentine dragons are knotted together in loops, and on their right (originally in the center of this side) there is a the frontal bust of a human figure in a niche. It might be a depiction of the deceased, and its relation to the other figural scenes is unclear.

The "man in the flying contrivance": Discussion

Even though the iconography of the monuments discussed so far differ in minor details, the degree of abstraction, and the quality of carving, they clearly form a distinguishable group of design which goes back to a common iconographical pattern which requires some explanation. The clue to the identification of the details of this iconographical pattern is offered by carvings from Gotland, Sweden. The picture stone Ardre VIII (Lindquist 1941-42, pl. 59, fig. 139) (as well as possibly Lärbro St. Hammars III (Lindquist 1941-42, pl. 30, fig. 85)) displays a more complex representation of the Weland myth, comprising also some other parts of the story.[35]

The picture stone Ardre VIII, from the second half of the eighth century, containing the iconographical representation of a number of Scandinavian mythological scenes, presents the Weland story in a tripartite composition. In the center of the picture we see a hut with grass-covered roof identified as a smithy on the basis of the typical instruments of a smith inside it. On the right side there are two headless corpses, the bodies of the two princes, referring to Weland's first vengeance. For our argumentation it is the left side of the picture which is of special importance: a birdlike figure leaving the smithy through an opening (window or door) with a female figure above its head. The Anglo-Saxon artists used this iconographical formula in an upright position to represent the Weland story, which, however, does not necessarily mean an immediate link between the two traditions. The iconographical scheme was probably transmitted to England through a long sequence of transmission on wood carvings or textiles, and it became reinterpreted or rationalized according to the Anglo-Saxon traditions. While the birdlike creature can with a fair degree of certainty be identified as the escaping Weland, the identity of the female figure remains obscure in both representations. Bishop Browne

[35] The following analysis is taken from Kopár 1999, 417-418.

interpreted the figure as the swan-maiden wife Alvítr, being carried off from the lakeshore (1885, 139). W.G. Collingwood (1927,163) and R. Bailey (1980, 106) identified the female figure as Beadohild, and argued for a combined representation of the rape and escape, while others suggest a lost version of the legend in which Beadohild escapes with Weland. K. Hauck's reading of the picture (similar to that of Browne) as Weland's valkyrie, whose crow suit combined with a special neckring is lying beside her (1977, 14-16), seems to me less convincing in the light of the Anglo-Saxon evidence.

Group II

The relation between the following carvings, all containing winged figures of various kinds, and the iconography of the Weland myth is rather questionable. Through the obvious emphasis on the element of flying in the Weland story in Viking-age England, these carvings have sometimes been associated with the Weland iconography as well, however, no clear evidence can support this association due to the lack of reference to other elements of the story in these carvings.

Crathorne 1, North Riding (NZ 444076), shaft fragment [10th c.]

Although all four sides are decorated with carvings, it is side C (broad) of the Crathorne shaft fragment which interest us in the present context [fig. 7]. Under a knot-like interlace there is a frontal winged human figure with a wedge-shaped face and a "forked, pointed beard" (Lang 2001, 85). The wings are natural looking and feathered, which is indicated by vertical incised lines. There are two thick horizontal lines across the torso, the lower part of he body is missing. The winged figure has been suggested to be derived from an image of an angel, or an evangelist symbol of Matthew (ibid.), but there is clearly no halo around his head. The bars across the body, out of which the two wings "grow," and the oval line between the wings and the head encircling the torso (which is interpreted in the CASSS description and "forked, pointed beard" and two arms), remind us of the rings binding Weland in his flying contrivance. However, an interpretation of the figure as angel might seem more probable in the light of the iconography of side A.

Side A shows a tightly coiled serpent with a triangular head viewed from above in the upper panel of the fragment, and the long, arched neck and head of a dragon-like beast in the lower one. The dragon has a long and opened snout, and ear-lappet or horn, and a

thin wing running down behind its back (Lang 2001, 84). If the coiled serpent and the dragon are representations of evil, as suggested by Rosemary Cramp (Lang 2001, 85), the iconographical program of the fragment might have included an opposition of good and evil on the two broad faces of the cross.

Egglescliffe 1, Co. Durham (NZ 421132), part of cross shaft [10th c.]

Similarly to Crathorne 1, side A of the Egglescliffe fragment [fig. 8] also displays a figure with large feathered wings where the feathering is indicated by long incised lines. We also find the double bars across which terminate in plant or scroll motifs. Even though the design of the two fragments are clearly dissimilar, they share important iconographical elements. Also the iconographical program of the two cravings might show similarity: on side D we find three incised coils which had been interpreted by Rosemary Cramp as "a crude incised plant-scroll with a drop leaf falling from a coil" (Cramp 1984, 75). Compared with Crathorne 1 side A, the image might rather by interpreted as a corrupted version of a coiled serpent with a triangular head, and thus the iconographical program with a opposition of good and evil on the facing sides of the cross would correspond to that of Crathorne 1. An interpretation of the winged figure as angel would therefore seem logical in the present context, but we cannot exclude the possibility of its depicting or at least alluding to Weland in his flying contrivance (cf. Lang 1972).

York Minster 9, York (SE 604524), fragment of cross shaft(?) [10th c.]

On side A (broad) of the much broken fragment of a cross shaft from York Minster [fig. 9] we find a frontal human figure with outstretched, large, feathered wings. The depiction, which has been suggested to be a possible representation of Weland, clearly differs from any other depiction discussed above. Even though other Yorkshire parallels (at Leeds, Bedale, Sherburn) suggest an interest in Weland's flight in this part of England and a possible overlap between his figure and that of angels (e.g. at Egglescliffe 1), the lack of further characteristic iconographical elements, e.g. the flying contrivance and the female figure, weaken the possibility of interpreting the winged figure here as Weland, or at least suggests an artist who was not familiar with the current local iconographical tradition of the story.

Side B (narrow) displays the rear half of a Viking-style profile beast with its leg and tail tucked beneath its torso. The beast seems to be fettered by at least two bands, one binding the body and the tail, the other binding the back. Whether the fettered beast could be interpreted as a representation of evil is questionable, but if so, the iconographical program of this fragment might follow the same pattern as we have seen above, that is, depicting the opposition of good and evil. In that case, the interpretation of the winged figure as angel would seem more logical, however, this would be rare in this place and time.

Sides C and D of the fragment are broken away.

Brompton 3, North Riding (SE 374964), upper part of shaft [first half of 10th c.]

The winged figure on side A (broad) of Brompton 3 [fig. 10], produced by the Allertonshire workshop, displays a further type of winged figure, which again clearly differs from the ones discussed above. The frontal male figure has a pear-shaped face, large eyes, and he seems to be standing in front of a curtain-like frame. His hands are crossed in front of his body, and he is holding a rectangular object, probably a book. Two large triangular shapes are hanging from slightly below his shoulders and in front of them, and a horizontal bar connecting them suggests that they are bound to his body. As opposed to the York Minster depiction, where the wings seems to be part of the human figure's body, this depiction shows parallels with the flying contrivance pattern, but the possible architectural background, the shape of the figure, as well as the rectangular object in his hands also recall traditional Mediterranean depictions of angels. Therefore, an identification of the figure as angel or an overlap of the two figures, Weland and an angel, would be possible interpretations.

In the case of the lower and much broken figure on side D (narrow), we can see the top of two triangular-shaped objects in front of his shoulders, which were also suggested to be "wing-like" (Lang 2001, 67). However, they clearly differ in their position from the wings of the side-A figure, thus I hold an interpretation of this figure as winged rather improbable. This is further supported by the fact that he might be tonsured, which would rule out the possibility of this figure being an angel (let alone Weland).

The panel above this figure on side D contains a frontally depicted man, most probably a cleric, with a thick hair (or halo?), wearing a long robe, and holding a book in

his hands. In the panel above his head there is a bird with its head missing. A similar type of bird is repeated in reverse twice in two adjacent panels on side C. The wings of the birds (peacocks or doves) are defined with diagonal lines imitating feathers, and they do not resemble at all the triangular wings or wing-like objects discussed in connection with the human figures. Whether this suggests a different interpretation of wings in the case of birds and humans (or angels) or it simply undermines our reading of the triangular objects as wings is hard to decide. The broken lowest panel of side C depicts two joined monstrous creatures, viewed from above (Lang 2001, 67). The combination of birds and reptilian beasts may again represent the opposition of good and evil, in which birds are images of good (referring to St. John or the risen Christ) and the reptilian beasts are creatures of evil or hell (Lang 2001, 68).

Side B (narrow) displays an Anglian plant scroll growing from a triangular root in the upper panel, and the top of a human head (in helmet?) and spear-head (probably depicting an Anglo-Scandinavian warrior) in the much broken lower panel, which nicely displays both the sculptor's indebtedness to the Anglian sculptural traditions and his adaptation of new Anglo-Scandinavian images.

Discussion

Summing up the pieces of evidence listed above, we may conclude that an Anglo-Saxon variant of the Weland myth definitely existed and differed in its emphasis from the Weland story known from the Scandinavian sources. The original Germanic myth, the form of which is unknown to us, was enriched in Scandinavia by integrating external narrative material on the basis of structural or motivic parallels, and it was modified and reinterpreted also in Anglo-Saxon England mainly under the influence of Christianity. I would suggest a differentiation between two possible versions of the Weland legend in the Anglo-Saxon period: (1) a "pagan version" reflected in the folk traditions centered around the figure of a supernatural (originally elvish)[36] archetypal craftsman or smith[37]

[36] According to the *Völundarkviða*, Weland and his brothers are the 'sons of the king of the Lapps' (*synir Finna konungs*, introductory prose passage, line 2), but later in the text he is called 'prince/master of the elves' (*álfa lióði*, 11,3; *vísi álfa*, 14,4=32,2). From medieval German tradition and the *Þidreks saga* his grandmother and father are known to be a giants, and his genealogy is as follows: Wachilt (giantess) > Wade (giant) > Weland > Wudga=Widia (Davidson 1964, 131).

[37] In Old Norse there was no word for 'artist'. The maker of any art object was called a smith (cf. *gullsmiðr* 'goldsmith'; *steinsmiðr* 'stone-smith or sculptor'; *járnsmiðr* 'iron-smith'; *silfrsmiðr* 'silversmith'; *trésmiðr* 'woodcarver'), and for a skilful man they used the term *hagr* 'handy, dexterous'. (Foote and Wilson 1974 [1970], 316) According to the testimony of literary sources, weapon smiths were looked upon as much

with unusual, even demonic power, and (2) a "rationalized variant" which developed under the influence of Christianity. This second version clearly treats Weland as a human being, a skillful craftsman or artist. His elvish origin is ignored[38] and his flight is reinterpreted in logical (physical) terms (i.e. with the use of a flying contrivance).[39] We might also assume that in this humanized-rationalized interpretation Beadohild gained a more active and central role (partly taking over that of the queen in the Scandinavian and maybe also in the ancient continental tradition), especially as the mother of Wudga (Widia), Weland's son, which would explain her appearance in *Deor*, in her second most important compositional position on the Franks Casket, and her association with an Anglo-Saxon burial place (in a charter of Anglo-Saxon date) (Davidson 1958, 149). Finally, it might also help us identify the female figure in the iconography of the stone carvings, at least in England.

The story of Weland was not only generally known, but linked with Christian themes already in the pre-Viking period: the eighth-century elegiac poem *Deor* has a Christian conclusion, and on the Franks Casket the Weland iconography appears in a Christian setting, with the Adoration of the Magi depicted in the opposing panel of the same side. From the tenth century onwards, the emphasis of the narrative shifted towards an increased interest in Weland's flight, which also re-interpreted the stories relation to the Christian lore. As we have seen above, on Viking-age carvings the main attribute of Weland is a pair of wings, either in the form of a flying contrivance or attached to his body. It is exactly this special ability to fly that offered a number of new links with Christianity. On Viking-age monuments also containing Christian iconography, Weland is related to or appears in the company of angels, evangelists in wing-like cloaks, or the eagle of St. John (at Leeds, see Richards 2000 [1991], 162).

Christianity had a twofold influence on the Weland narrative. While preserving the original status of Weland as archetypal smith and "artist" (1) it humanized and demythologized the semi-mythological and partly supernatural hero, and (2) it

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more important than jewelers. Weland's person unites in himself both the jeweler and the weapon-smith, thus being the archetypal craftsman.

[38] Elves, who originally were neither negatively nor positively connotated beings, gradually gained a negative connotation under the influence of Christianity and became associated with demons. Their name was even used as an epithet for Satan in connection with demonic possessions. (North 1997, 53ff.)

[39] The Scandinavian version of the Germanic myth, as it is recorded in the *Völundarkviða*, probably incorporated a Lappish tradition of shamanic *spirit* journey, but this alien cultural element was rationalized in Anglo-Saxon England and reinterpreted in terms of a *physical* flight. For a detailed analysis of Weland's flight see Kopár 2002.

foregrounded certain elements of the story, namely the suffering of Weland in captivity (in the earlier representations), and later his revenge and flight (primarily in the Viking period). Visual representations, by necessity of their iconic nature, followed these shifts of emphasis in the narrative, and serve as our guides through the changes of the story.

SIGURD AND THE VÖLSUNG LEGEND

We continue our investigation with the figure of Sigurd the dragon-slayer for two reasons. Similarly to Weland, he is also a non-divine, heroic figure, who enjoyed great popularity according to the surprisingly high number of carvings surviving with depictions of his legend. The other reason is more peculiar: the two stories, that of Weland and Sigurd, not only show correspondences and even borrowings, but it seem that the two stories and figures have been mingled on some of the carvings.

Sources and analogues

The story of Sigurd the Völsung[40] is recorded in a number of literary accounts, the most extensive and best known of which are the Old Icelandic *Völsunga saga* (compiled in the second half of the 13th c.), the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied* (ca. 1200), and a summary in Snorri Sturluson's *Skáldskaparmál* (ca. 1220). The *Völsunga saga* (one of the Fornaldarsögur) goes back to older heroic lays, some of which survived in the Poetic Edda, such as the *Atlamál*, the *Atlakviða*, the *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, and the *Reginsmál*, but it also provides us with additional details of the legend (Simek and Pálsson 1987, 393). The popularity of the Völsung legend in Viking-age England might be explained by its association with the story of the historic Ragnar Lothbrok and his sons, Ivar the Boneless and Halfdan, leaders of the "great heathen army," which arrived in England in 865/66: in the surviving manuscripts the *Völsunga saga* functions as a introductory story (*Vorgeschichte*) to the *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* (Simek and Pálsson 1987, 393). Although both sagas are dated to the second half of the thirteenth century, they both reflect earlier (even if historically incorrect) traditions also attested in other sources. The story of the Völsungs and Ragnar provide several links and points of overlap which promoted the association. The most obvious link is that, according to the *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, Ragnar married the daughter of Sigurd, Áslaug. Further similarities on the level of narrative elements are Ragnar's killing a dragon (cf. Sigurd) and his death in a snakepit (at the court of King Ella of Northumbria) (cf. Gunnar).

The Sigurd legend clearly belongs to the most popular narrative materials of Scandinavian heroic poetry as well as prose literature. Among the lays of the Poetic Edda,

[40] Old Norse *Sigurðr Fáfnisbani*; MHG/ModG *Siegfried*.

preserved in the Codex Regius, the *Reginsmál* (earlier called *Sigurðarkviða Fáfnisbana önnur*) and the *Fáfnismál* record the story of Sigurd's youth, the *Sigrdrífomál* is about his wooing of Brynhild (Sigrdrífa) for Gunnar, and finally the *Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta* and *önnur* report on his violent death, Gudrun's mourning for him, and the fate of her and Brynhild. In addition to the *Grípisspá*, which gives a summary of Sigurd's life in the form of a prophesy, we know of three other Sigurd lays: the *Sigurðarkviða in forna* (usually called *Brot of Sigurðarkviðu* because of its now fragmentary nature (19 stanzas)), the *Sigurðarkviða in scamma* (71 stanzas), and the now lost *Sigurðarkviða in meiri*, which originally consisted of more than 160 stanzas (Simek and Pálsson 1987, 315-16). Among the prose versions the *Völsunga saga* and the *Þidreks saga*, mentioned above in connection with the Weland legend, provide the fullest account of the story.

Pictorial representations from Scandinavia

The popularity of the Völsung legend is also confirmed by an unusually high number of surviving visual representation from Scandinavia as well as from England. The earliest depictions from the Viking Age present select episodes of the story without panel division. Sue Margeson suggested the following list of "diagnostic features" (frequently depicted episodes) for the identification of the pictorial representations of the legend (1980, 184):

> *Sigurd scenes:* association with the smith (Regin) who forges a sword for the hero; the killing of Fafnir the dragon from beneath; the roasting of Fafnir's heart and Sigurd sucking his thumb; the birds who warn Sigurd of Regin's treachery; Grani, the horse loaded with the treasure of the dragon.
>
> *Gunnar scenes:* a bound figure playing the harp with his toes in a snakepit (surrounded by snakes).

The appearance and frequency of each episode in a given region and time period may be conclusive about the regional and temporal variant of the story as well as its main points of interest for the community in the present cultural context.

A detailed survey of all the Scandinavian material would clearly exceed the limits of this dissertation, thus only the most important pre-Romanesque monuments will be listed here as comparative material to the insular depictions. The earliest and rather uncertain representation of the Völsung legend is found on the front of the Oseberg cart

(ca. 800), and it has been identified as Gunnar in the snakepit. The image (a man among snakes) is related to a number of other early representations on metalwork found in Gotland and Scotland and on picture stones from Gotland (e.g. Klinte Hunninge I, Ardre VIII), as well as on late Saxon stirrup-strap mounts (Class A, Type 3, cf. Williams 1997, 36-39). The identification of this iconographical pattern as Gunnar in the snakepit is, however, doubtful; it could just as well be an archetypical depiction of a hero's struggle with beasts.

The best defined scenes of the Sigurd cycle survive in Sweden and Norway. The Swedish material comprises four narrative carvings from Ramsund, Gök, Drävle, and Ramsjö.[41] On the carving on a natural rock from *Ramsund* (Södermanland) various scenes of the story are depicted without scenic division, but encircled in an oval band (the lower half of which is a rune band[42] and the upper one a decorated line) as a frame. The only figure outside the frame is Sigurd killing Fafnir with a large sword from below, where the serpentine dragon appears as the rune band which frames the groups of images. Within the frame we find (from left to right) the decapitated body of Regin surrounded by his smith's tools; Sigurd (with overlarge hands) roasting Fafnir's heart and sucking his thumb; above it a small quadruped (dog?); on the right side Grani, the horse, with a treasure box(? or saddle) on his back and tied to a tree; and finally two birds sitting on the same tree. A similar carving with the same motifs survives on a picture stone with runes from *Gök* (Södermanland). Even though it displays largely the same iconographical elements, the framed image is rather disorganized, the figures are misshapen (almost surrealistic), and it seems to show a number of misinterpretations of an earlier model (possibly the Ramsund stone or a related monument). In *Drävle* (Uppland) we have a part of a picture stone with runes, similar to the ones discussed above. It depicts Sigurd piercing the dragon (as rune band), but this time he is inside the frame. Below that there is a tree surrounded by a male figure on the left holding a large ring and a female with a drinking horn on the right. The scene probably represents Sigurd wooing Sigrdrífa (Margeson 1980, 193), a narrative element not identified elsewhere in visual sources. The *Ramsjö*

[41] Three other rune stones from Gästrikland (Årsunda, as well as Ocklebo and Österfärnebo (both lost)) show partial resemblance with the iconographical patterns known from the Sigurd cycle, however, the identification of the images on these stones are very uncertain (cf. Margeson 1980, 194).

[42] The runic inscription states that the stone was raised by Sigrid for the soul of her husband Holmger. (Ellis [Davidson] 1942, 221)

(Uppland) picture stone is the poorest exemplar of the pictorial tradition outlined above, and it seems to be an imitation of the Drävle image.

The Norwegian material of three stones is all dated to the eleventh century on the basis of Ringerike-style elements appearing on them. The identification of the iconography on all three stones is uncertain, however, they are often associated with the Völsung legend. The picture stone from *Alstad* (Oppland) shows a man on a horse with a hawk followed by his dogs, a riderless horse, and a horseman with a weapon. It may depict the return of the Grani with Gunnar and Högni after the killing of Sigurd at hunting. The *Tanberg* stone (Buskerud) has been classified as a trial piece, and the unfinished carving shows a sword piercing through a dragon, similarly to the Swedish pattern, but there is no human figure to wield the sword.[43] The most uncertain representation is that on the *Gran* stone (Oppland) which only shows tools of a smith, but no further reference is given either to Regin or to any other part of the Völsung legend (Margeson 1980, 194).

The most amazing and detailed pictorial representations of the legend of the Völsungs are undoubtedly the twelfth- and thirteenth-century carvings on the wooden portals of stave churches in Norway, the most elaborate examples of which are the ones in *Hylestad, Vegusdal* and *Austad* (in Aust-Agder), dated to the late twelfth century, and in *Lardal* (Vestfold) and *Mael* (Upper Telemark, dated to the thirteenth century.[44] These Romanesque depictions show episodic division in the form of medallions, and are clearly the best known examples of the visual representation of the Völsung legend, but alas, they exceed the time frame of the present survey.

The insular evidence

The presence of various pictorial representations of the story of the Völsungs in the British Isles testifies the popularity of the legend also in this part of the Germanic-speaking world, even though no written narrative accounts survive from this region. A reference to Sigemund (the father of Sigurd in the Scandinavian and German sources), the famous dragon slayer in *Beowulf* (ll. 874-897) indicates that at least parts of the Völsung legend were known to the early Anglo-Saxons (even if probably in a version which

[43] On the blade of an eleventh-century axe from Vladimir-Susdal in Russia we find a similar, highly stylized serpentine dragon pierced through by a sword. (Bailey 1980, 119)

differed from the extant Norse variant where the dragon killing is attributed to Sigurd[45]). In the fragmentary poem *Eiríksmál*, composed as a tribute to Erik Bloodaxe, the last Viking king of York (d. 954), Erik meets two heroic members of the Völsung family, Sigemund (Sigmundr) and Sinfjötli (Sinfjatli) (stanzas 4-5), when arriving at the Valhalla.[46]

In spite of the fact that the earliest written sources are from the later medieval period, we have seen visual evidence above for the existence of all major narrative scenes already in the Viking Age (if not earlier), and insular visual evidence further supports this claim. The majority of the insular depictions is dated to the Viking period and comes from the northern areas, except for the late Saxon stirrup strap mounts with a rather uncertain Gunnar-iconography (see above). According to the testimony of surviving Scandinavian woodwork from a slightly later period and literary references to tapestry,[47] we may suppose that depictions of the Völsung legend were imported to and circulated in England on the same perishable media, which are now lost.[48]

The surviving insular representations of the Sigurd story are in stone,[49] and they are confined to the Isle of Man, Northern Lancashire, and Yorkshire.[50] The northern English evidence will be discussed in detail below, thus only the Manx stones and a monument from Govan will be surveyed here. From the Isle of Man we have three carved cross-slabs from Jurby, Malew (both made shortly after 950), and Kirk Andreas (second half of the tenth century), and the remains of a cross shaft from Ramsey (now in Maughold; made around 1000).

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[44] Further examples are the carvings from Nes and Lunde (Telemark), both dated to the twelfth century, and depicting the killing of Fafnir by Sigurd.

[45] Cf. for example, Jack 1994, 78, footnotes to lines 874b-97, 875, 877, 881, and 892.

[46] References to the extended Völsung legend (the court of Attila) are also found in *Widsith* and *Waldere*.

[47] According to the *Flateyjarbók*, the Norwegian king St. Olaf (reigned 1016-1030) asked the skald Þorfinnr to compose a poem on the decorative tapestry in the hall which depicted the killing of Fafnir by Sigurd. (Ellis [Davidson] 1942, 226; Margeson 1980, 209)

[48] H. Schück suggested (also) an opposite way of influence in deriving the Swedish stone carvings and the Norwegian wood carvings from art forms introduced from England. (Davidson 1942, 218)

[49] H.R. Ellis Davidson (1950, 135-36) mentions a little bronze cylindrical workbox of mid-seventh-century date from the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Burwell, which shows a human figure plunging a weapon into the underside of a dragon. The figure seems to be lying flat and stabbing upwards, which might prompt an identification of the scene as Sigurd killing Fafnir.

[50] An earlier episode of the Völsung legend, when Sigemund clamped in stocks in the forest (together with his brothers) managed to kill an attacking she-wolf by biting off its tongue, is depicted with some certainty on an eleventh-century fragment of a narrative frieze found in Old Minster, Winchester. (Biddle 1966, 329-32) This is a further proof of the popularity of various episodes of the extended Völsung legend also in the south.

The slab from *Jurby* (no. 119 (93))[51] with the remains of a ring-headed cross on it depicts under the right lateral arm Sigurd killing Fafnir from a pit. Even though the image is vertical, a semicircular line between Sigurd and the serpentine dragon as well as the bodily postures of both figures indicate that the hero is attacking from "below." Below this scene a rather worn human figure is standing raising his left hand to his mouth and holding a stick with something on the end of it in his other hand. The image is a depiction of Sigurd roasting Fafnir's heart. Beneath him is a quadruped, probably a horse. On the very worn *Malew* slab (no. 120 (94)) we also find the killing of Fafnir depicted in a similar way under the right lateral arm as on the previous carving. Above it Sigurd is shown roasting Fafnir's heart: a seated man in a helmet is sucking his left thumb, while in his right hand he is holding a stick with two circular objects on it. The horse on the left side of the cross is probably Grani. The stone slab from *Kirk Andreas* (no. 121 (95)) displays under the left arm of the cross (from the bottom towards the top) the serpent-like Fafnir being killed by Sigurd, Sigurd's roasting Fafnir's heart with his thumb in his mouth and holding a stick with three slices of the heart on it over flames of fire, the heads of the horse Grani (with a runic graffito on his neck reading *kan* (Margeson 1983, 100)) and of a bird. On the reverse side, in the center of the cross stem, a bound figure surrounded by snakes may represent Gunnar in the snakepit. The fragment of a stone cross found at *Ramsey* (now Maughold no. 122 (96)) shows, in addition to smith's tools, a stick with rings on it (which alludes to Sigurd's roasting the dragon's heart on a spit), and a horse with a pack on its back, an early scene from the Sigurd story at the bottom of the face: an otter with a fish in its mouth. Next to the spread-eagled otter is a seated figure lifting his right hand with something in it. It is tempting to interpret it as Sigurd roasting the dragon's heart, but its displacement from the stick also allows for another reading, namely it could be Loki aiming at the otter with a stone in his hand (Ellis [Davidson] 1942, 230).

The last representation that should be mentioned here is the one from Govan on the Clyde (Glasgow), because of its significance as comparative material for the interpretation of the iconography of the Nunburnholme cross. It shows two figures seated opposite each other, one of them with his hand raised to his mouth and the other with a misshapen head. The object between them could be an anvil or a spit (Bailey 1980, 122).

[51] The first number is as in Wilson (1970-73), while the number in brackets is the stone's number in Kermode's corpus (1907).

SZTE Egyetemi Könyvtár SZEGED 14.

The scene might depict Sigurd's meal, and the unusual head of the second figure could reflect the animal nature of Regin (cf. Nunburnholme cross below).

Points of the Weland-Sigurd overlap

Before the actual discussion of the Viking-age stone monuments, we need to make a short detour here to examine an interesting question, namely the possible overlap of Weland and Sigurd, since it will be necessary for the interpretation of the iconography on some of the carvings.

The iconographical overlap between the two smiths, Weland and Regin, was recognized already by Bishop Browne in 1885 (143). The Weland story in general has several narrative elements in common with the Sigurd cycle (cf. Davidson 1958, 154 and 1969, 224), and the two stories may have even been confused in Northern England (Lang 1976, 90; Bailey 1980, 116). The elements shared between the two stories are: (1) references to the smith / to a smithy scene (Weland working for Niðhad, cf. Sigurd trying his sword on Regin's anvil and Regin forging a magic sword for him); (2) cunning smith with supernatural brothers or origin (Weland's elvish origin, cf. Regin, the dwarf-smith); (3) a headless body (Niðhad's sons killed by Weland, cf. Sigurd cutting off Regin's head after piercing him through (according to *Fáfnismál*)); (4) a magic ring (Weland's ring for/from his swanwife later given to Beadohild, cf. Andvari's ring); (5) a wonderful horse (Weland's horse, Skemming, mentioned in the *Þidreks saga*, cf. Grani, Sigurd's horse); (6) a valkyrie bride (Weland's swanmaiden is often associated with valkyries, cf. Sigrdrífa); (7) the motif of vengeance; (8) killing of young princes and turning their skulls into drinking cups (Weland's revenge on Niðhad, cf. Gudrun's revenge on Atli by having his two sons killed and drinking cups made out of their skulls).[52] The high number of common narrative elements might indicate that the two stories both go back to a typical heroic proto-myth, which, according to H.R. Ellis Davidson, might have been related to the cult of Odin (1969, 224).

The association of the two stories with each other in Anglo-Scandinavian England is demonstrated by the sharing, or even borrowing, of certain iconographical elements (especially from the Weland iconography to depict the Sigurd legend), as we will see on

[52] A further point of overlap might be referred to in the enigmatic phrase *be wurman* in line 1a of the poem *Deor*, which might be an allusion to a snakepit, suggesting an parallel between Weland's and Gunnar's punishment. (cf. discussion in the previous chapter)

some of the following carvings. In some cases the shared (or borrowed) visual elements add new features to the original narrative which are unattested elsewhere.

Pre-Conquest stone monuments

We start our survey of Anglo-Scandinavian stone carvings from Northern England with the two most interesting and challenging representations which have induced most disagreement in the scholarly literature of the Sigurd iconography.

Halton, Lancashire (ca. SD 505645), cross shaft [10th c.]

The principal face (Collingwood's face r (1927, 160, fig. 191)) of the magnificent Halton cross [fig. 11] displays three figurative carvings which had been recognized already by H.C. March (1891, 62-63) as related to the Sigurd story. In the largest panel at the bottom of the shaft, a smith (Regin) is shown at work, seated at an anvil, and identified by his tools (bellows, pliers, hammers) scattered around. The panel also contains a headless body in its upper part and serpentine interlace. Interestingly enough, Regin is depicted twice in the same panel: he is seated at the anvil and he also lies headless in the corner. According to Lang (1976, 90), one of them is out of sequence, which may be the result of a possible mixing of the Weland and the Sigurd narratives, and the headless body might have been borrowed from the Weland depictions (cf. Franks Casket). However, it could also be a compressed representation of the story where the smithy functions as a means of identification for the headless body of Regin, even though the actual act of beheading (only mentioned in the *Fáfnismál*) did not happen there.

The upper panel of this face is divided into two. In the lower half the scene depicts Sigurd roasting Fafnir's heart, where Sigurd is seen in profile with his left hand raised as if he were sucking his thumb, and he is holding a spit above a fire. In the upper panel two birds are sitting in a bush or tree. On the southern side of the cross (Collingwood's face s) the carvings of the lower panels are largely weathered away, but in the upper panel March (1891, 63) recognized the horse Grani returning riderless after Sigurd's death, and at the top a pit filled with snakes awaiting Gunnar.

The western side of the cross (Collingwood's side t) displays entirely Christian iconography symbolizing the resurrection. A vacant cross is surrounded by two disciples,

below them two chalices, and above them Christ enthroned, with two smaller figures sitting at his feet. The northern face (Collingwood's u) only contains interlace patterns.

Nunburnholme 1a-b, East Riding (SE 847478), cross shaft (two non-adjacent pieces) [late 9th to early 10th c.]

The two fragments of the impressive cross shaft of Nunburnholme [fig. 12] were discovered in 1873, both built into the wall of the church. The two pieces have been reconstructed and the shaft was reerected in its present location inside the church tower. However, the fragments were fitted together wrongly, having been turned 180 degrees in relation to each other and missing a piece in the middle. Since the present condition does not reflect the original iconography of the shaft, in the following the original faces will be described.

James Lang established the work of three subsequent hands on the shaft. The first sculptor was responsible for the overall design and the carvings on face D and parts of face A. His unfinished work was continued by the second sculptor, a less able artist, who completed face A, made most of face B and face C. He was probably also responsible for the intrusive carving on the lower panel of face D, which is of significance for the present discussion. The third sculptor only carved the intrusive centaur on side A (Lang 1976b, 76-82). The figure at the top of face B is perhaps the work of a fourth hand involved (Lang 1991, 192).

It is the lower part of face D (= fragment b (north)) [fig. 13] that displays the scene related to the Sigurd iconography. It shows two small sitting figures that were added to the original cross by the second sculptor on top of a large seated figure with a book-satchel, holding a cup-like chalice in his right hand. He is probably a priest celebrating mass. The lower part of the figure has been cut away to accommodate the two confronted figures. The feet of the priest, however, can still be seen between the two figures, which shows that they were superimposed on the image of the cleric. The left figure is raising his left hand towards his mouth and in his right hand he is holding a large ring. The other figure on the left is sitting on a chair and seems to have a zoomorphic head.[53] The two figures are either Sigurd and Regin (Davidson 1950, 129; Pattison 1973,

[53] Animal-headed figures are also found on Kirklevington 4A and Baldersby 1C (maybe also Kirklevington 16C) in Yorkshire. James Lang considered them Irish motifs (Lang 2001, 144). (See next footnote)

229ff.; Lang 1976a, 89 and 1976b, 88) or SS Paul and Anthony[54] breaking bread in the desert (Margeson 1980, 191; Bailey 1980, 122). The scene has been identified by Pattison as Sigurd in the smithy at the forging of the magic sword. According to Lang (1976a, 89), it is more likely to be the eating of the dragon's heart cut into a sliced ring, as it is also suggested by the sucking of the thumb. The scene was obviously transported to the smithy, thus contracting the narrative in the manner of the Halton and Kirby Hill carvings. Of course, the ring (of Andvari) also plays an important part in the Sigurd story, but it would mean a further contraction of the story in the same panel, which seems less probable. Regin's zoomorphic head is rather unusual, and it is not supported by the literary sources. However, there is a comparable depiction on the side of a slab at Govan on the Clyde (see above), where an animal-headed human is sitting on a chair and facing a thumb-sucking figure (Lang 1976a, 89).

The recarving of the image of a priest celebrating mass while leaving much of his body well visible might suggest a deliberate connection between the old and the new carvings. SS Paul and Anthony's breaking bread is a symbol of the Mass or Eucharist, which would explain the link with the original carving of a priest. Sigurd's mystic meal also contains a central element which corresponds to the Eucharist, namely the acquiring of knowledge through blood.

The rest of the cross's iconography is unrelated to the Sigurd story. The upper fragment (a) of face D [fig. 14] has a profile beast in a semicircular frame above the arch. In the arched panel there is a frontal figure of a saint with a halo. The upper part (a) of face A [fig. 15] shows a seated swordsman in a helmet, facing left. The upper half of the lower fragment (b) of the same side [fig. 16] displays a seated cleric in profile (head missing), holding a book in his left hand. The lower half of the panel has been defaced to accommodate the intrusive carving of a centaur with a child on its back. Fragment a of face B [fig. 17] has a frontal hooded figure with a large rectangle on her chest, probably an abbess, while the lower fragment shows a beast-chain of large profile animals. The upper half (a) of face C [fig. 16] depicts the Virgin and Child in half-profile. Their heads are framed by halos, and Christ is holding a book in his hand. The lower fragment (b) [fig. 15] shows a large frontal figure (head missing) with two birds on his shoulders, probably in the act of benediction: he is resting his hands on the heads of two smaller

[54] The Kirklevington carvings (nos. 4A and 16C), depicting confronting profile beasts or figures with

seated figures below. Sculptural analogies of the scene are found on the Halton cross and on York Minster 2A (Lang 1976b, 89), and it also vaguely resembles the design on the recarved lower fragment of face D.[55]

At the top of faces A, B, and D the arches are gripped by winged figures, while on face C the panel above the arch contains two confronting birds.

Kirby Hill 2, North Riding (SE 393686), upper part of a cross shaft [first half of the 10th c.]

The shaft is now built into the south wall of the nave, thus only one face is visible [fig. 18]. In the lower right corner are remains of two loops, probably part of a dragon's body. Above it there is a figure with his hand raised towards his mouth, next to it a tapering block with a flat top which resembles an anvil, and above it a decapitated body. At the top of the shaft, separated from the lower panel by a moulding, are the feet of Christ from a Crucifixion scene, which probably formed the lower part of the original cross head. While Margeson (1980, 191) dismissed the shaft as iconographically "illegible," its images have been identified by Lang as depicting Sigurd's meal, the decapitated Regin, and the slain Fafnir. Here we might face a further example of mixing the stories of Weland and Sigurd, because according to the *Völsunga saga*, Regin's head was not struck off in a smithy (Lang 1976, 90). However, the anvil can also be a reference to an earlier episode in the story (the forging of the magic sword).

Kirby Hill 9, North Riding (SE 393686), fragment of a grave marker [late 9th to mid-10th c.] (lost; missing by 1974)

The iconography of this stone, missing by 1974, is only known to us from Rowe's illustrations from 1870 (p. 241, fig. 7) [fig. 19]. On face A Rowe's drawing shows part of a an L-shaped knotted dragon whose body is pierced by a sword from the left, but there is no human figure visible. The scene clearly resembles Scandinavian depictions of the killing of Fafnir, thus in the Sigurd context the figure of a horse in profile on the reverse side (C) has been identified by Lang (1976, 86) as Grani. It is interesting to note that the

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animals heads, have also been associated with the Temptation of St. Anthony (Lang 2001, 149.

[55] Lang does not exclude the possibility that the scene on the Nunburnholme cross might be "a final stage in a stylistic progression of Irish Crucifixion scenes" (1976b, 89; cf. also Lang 1991,193).

two Kirby Hill fragments depict different episodes of the Sigurd story, which seems to point to a broad pictorial tradition of the story known in the region.

Ripon, North Riding (ca. SE 315715), fragment of a cross-head

The frontal face of a cross head found in the north transept of Ripon Cathedral is filled with illustrative carving related to the Sigurd legend. In the upper arm the seated figure in profile with his right hand raised to his mouth has been identified by James Lang (1976, 86; 1977) as Sigurd sucking his thumb, accompanied by remains of the dead Fafnir in the lateral arm. Sue Margeson (1980, 190), however, questions this identification and points out the affinities of the crouching figure with orants and devotees in similar positions on Celtic crosses (e.g. on the cross of SS Patrick and Columba at Kells, or the cross from Drumhallagh, Donegal). It is also possible, however, that the two iconographical patterns of different origins have been merged in this figure, and it is the context, that is the lack of similar orans figures on northern English carvings that prompts the more common Sigurd reading. The reverse face is filled with interlace ornaments. It is remarkable that, as opposed to for example the Kirby Hill shaft, here it is the cross head, usually reserved for strictly Christian representations, which carries the Sigurd iconography.

York Minster 34 (grave 7), York (SE 604524), grave-slab [10th c.]

A large, flat grave stone in York Minster, found *in situ* above burial 7, shows various episodes of the Sigurd story on two of its faces. On the long side of the slab (face D) [fig. 20] a "running" figure is depicted in profile, holding a sword, and fighting two gaping knotted, serpentine beasts. At the feet of the human figure is a severed dragon's head (Lang 1991, 71). Even though a depiction with two beasts is rather unusual, the scene might be related to Sigurd's killing of Fafnir, since the position of the human figure's legs are similar to the depictions of Sigurd in the pit on the Ramsund stone and the Hylestad portal. The two dragons are also displayed on the Ramsund stone, judging by the two heads on the frame (Lang 1976, 83). At the bottom of the worn top face (A) [fig. 21] an S-shaped dragon (the dead Fafnir) lies in a heap, above it there is a triangle (fire) below a horizontal bar, and on the side a human figure with his hand raised to his mouth. The scene has been identified by James Lang (ibid. 84) as the heart-roasting scene

on the basis of its similarity with the Manx stones and Yorkshire crosses. Opposite Sigurd is a headless torso which can be identified as the dead Regin. Above it the horse Grani is depicted in profile. Above all is a very worn, unidentified standing figure between decorative borders.

The other long side of the slab (B) is decorated with Anglo-Scandinavian-style interlace pattern, while face C (end) [fig. 22] shows two profile animals in combat and another bear-like animal in profile, which cannot be related to the Sigurd iconography.

York Minster 46, York (SE 604524), fragments of a hogback [10th c.]

This fragment of a hogback stone was discovered in the foundations of York Minster. Unfortunately it was accidentally destroyed (only reconstructed fragments remain), but not before a photograph was taken *in situ* of its gable end [fig. 23]. The lost vertical gable end displayed a frontal human being with spread arms, the elbows dipped. He was bound by snakes that were trying to bite him beneath the arm pits. The image reminds us of the Gunnar representations, although the harp is missing, but so is the lower part of the body. Pattison (1973, 215) identified it as a Crucifixion scene, which can be justified by other insular and Scandinavian Crucifixion depictions where snakes or serpentine bands surround the body of Christ. An intended overlap between the human figure fighting with snakes or beasts and the figure of Christ is also possible (Bailey 1980, 139).

Heysham, Lancashire (ca. SD 415615), hogback [10th c.]

One side of the hogback of Heysham [fig. 24] shows a stag hunt with four hunters and a pack of hounds, which has (in my opinion falsely) been interpreted by March as a Ragnarök scene with Viðar-Christ, the divine hart (1891, 78). It probably depicts a simple hunt scene, but we cannot exclude a possible link with the "hart and hound" motif (discussed below).[56]

The other side displays a stylized tree, two birds, a quadruped with long tail and a triangular lump on his back, and a man with raised hands (like the hunters on the other

[56] An interesting link between Sigurd and the stag has been suggested by Emil Ploss (1966, 109ff; cited in Lang 1976, 88). In the *Völsunga saga* and *Fáfnismál* Sigurd call himself *göfugt dýr* 'splendid deer, noble beast or stag', and in the *Guðrunarkvida II* he is compared with the "high-boned hart among the keen beasts." Although the parallel is tempting, I doubt these later kennings can be relevant for the interpretation of this side, since the association with the stag could simply refer to the noble nature of a man in general.

side). The scene has been identified as one belonging to the Sigurd cycle (Davidson 1950, 131; Lang 1976a, 86), but it could also be a simple hunt scene, like the one on the other face (Margeson 1980, 191). According to R. Bailey, if we interpret the carving as part of the Sigurd iconography, "we stray near the frontiers of credibility, for there is no trace of either serpent or thumb-sucking" (1980, 121).

Discussion

The Völsung legend as a whole consists of two distinguishable parts: a mythological story and a semi-historical story with historic characters. The breaking point in the legend is Sigurd's encounter with the valkyrie Sigrdrífa. It is also possible that there were more independent stories which were later joined together to form the long Völsung saga: the mythological origin of the gold (the otter episode); Sigurd's slaying the dragon; Sigurd's encounter with the valkyrie; and the semi-historical Burgundian episode. The earliest evidence of joining *all* these episodes in one narrative sequence comes from twelfth-century and later Scandinavian literary sources and wood carvings, therefore, it is hard to tell whether all episodes were known and considered part of the same legend in the British Isles. On the basis of the Manx stone monuments we can postulate the following elements as parts of the legend by the end of the tenth century: the otter and the salmon (the onset of the story); Regin the smith and his treachery; the dragon-killing (from a pit); the roasting of the dragon's heart (and Sigurd licking his thumb and thereby learning about Regin's treachery); Grani the horse; and possibly the death of Gunnar in a snakepit. The first definite linking of the story of Sigurd and Gunnar in the snakepit occurs on the Kirk Andreas stone slab from the Isle of Man.

We noted above the possible confusing of the Weland and the Sigurd stories on the basis of the carvings from Halton and Kirby Hill, where a decapitated body appears in a smithy, although Regin's head was not struck off there. In this context the smithy was either depicted as an "attribute" in order to help identifying the body as that of a smith (here Regin), or the iconographical pattern was simply borrowed from the Weland depictions (based on the visual correspondence) where the headless bodies of the princes are lying in the smithy. Nunburnholme provides a further example of a possible borrowing or influence with the combination of a ring and an anvil, which recalls Beadohild's bringing the broken ring to Weland's smithy. What we have here might be a

borrowing of iconographical patterns for expressing a similar narrative episode, for which we have several examples from art history. This certainly proves the association of the two legends with each other, probably because they both go back to a common heroic proto-narrative, but it does not necessarily indicate the mixing of the two stories. Since we do not have any sufficient narrative sources to reconstruct the versions of the two legends as known in Anglo-Saxon England, our hypothesis will remain tentative.

The surviving depictions of the Völsung legend can be grouped around two figures, Sigurd and Gunnar, which represent the two halves of the story. Early representations, if we can ever be certain about their meaning, seem to focus on Gunnar in the snakepit, although this episode may have belonged to a separate story or occupied a different position in the cycle. Viking-age carvings from England concentrate on the figure of Sigurd, highlighting a few significant scenes of the story: Regin in the smithy; the killing of Fafnir, the dragon; the roasting and eating of the dragon's heart; and the birds on the tree. The selection of these scenes suggests that in the Anglo-Scandinavian communities the first half of the story was favored. It would clearly be false to claim that the selection was made on the basis of possible Christian parallels, but interestingly enough some of the favored scenes have easily found counterparts in the Christian lore.

The most frequent parallel (and favorite theme of later tympana) is that of Sigurd the dragonslayer figuring as the pagan counterpart of St. Michael (Ellis [Davidson] 1942; Lang 1976a; Bailey 1980, 124-5; Bailey 1996, 93). St. Michael's struggle with the Serpent of the Apocalypse is also paralleled by the encounter of Thor and the Midgard serpent, and later, of course, by St. George and the dragon. In this context Sigurd appears as a Christian soldier (*miles Christi*) and his heroic deed symbolizes the vistory of good over evil (in the form of a dragon) (cf. next chapter). The Eucharist scene on the Nunburnholme cross recarved with a scene depicting the meal of Sigurd and Regin suggests an intended comparison between the Eucharistic meal and Sigurd's mystic meal with the miracle of the blood, which also functions as a kind of initiation where special knowledge is gained. The birds on the tree form part of the episode of the mystic meal, where the language of the birds might symbolize "the prophetic element, the revelation of spiritual secrets" (Lindholm 1969, 57). The central role of the tree as source of knowledge, indicated by its prominent position on many of the carvings, recalls the tree in the garden of Eden, but this might already lead us too far from credibility. The last

possible (and least probable) Christian parallel is related to the second half of the story, and that is the intended overlap between Gunnar and the snakes and Christ on the cross. The struggle of Christ with serpentine beasts is well known, but whether Gunnar should be called into the picture is doubtful.

By the twelfth century, the iconography of the Völsung legend was at least acceptable for the church as it is demonstrated by the frequency of carvings related to the legend in Scandinavian churches. More skeptical scholars deny the fact that the images meant anything more for the Christian builders of these churches than traditional patterns of ornamentation in wood carving (Lindholm 1969, 47). However, the same church portals inspired others to come up with overtly Christian interpretations where every element of the Völsung legend was given a Christian parallel. H.C. March (1891, 60-61), for example, gave a forcefully Christianized reading of the Völsung depiction on Norwegian church portals according to the fashion of late nineteenth-century interpretations. He saw the function of these carvings in scaring away demons by representing Sigurd, the dragonslayer as a Christian soldier. For him the tree with the birds was clearly the Tree of Knowledge, Grani, the riderless horse Christ's palfrey, a symbol of the Redeemer's death, and Gunnar's snakepit a representation of hell.

Dan Lindholm identified in the legend of the Völsungs "a story of the Fall, in which the gold stands for the tree of knowledge" (1969, 49), and suggested a relation between the exterior and interior of these stave churches similar to that of the Old Testament and the New Testament, which would relate the Völsung legend to the Old Testament (ibid. 48).[57] In connection with the insular carvings, James Lang also saw a link between the Sigurd story and the Old Testament: "One possibility is that the Sigurd cycle overlaps with Genesis, for in iconographical terms the elements have much in common: serpent, the act of eating and the tree. Regin acts the tempter and he is brother to the serpent who is questioned about eschatology when killed by Sigurd [*Fáfnismál*, ll. 10-15]. Secondly, both Sigurd and Adam eat illicitly and gain knowledge thereby, and the tree inhabited by the informative birds often occupies a dominant position in the design. The result of eating the heart or the apple is the same for both: death. References to death in the iconography of funerary sculpture are only to be expected." (Lang 1976, 94)

[57] All in all, Lindholm gives a psychological (or psychoanalytical) reading of the story where Fafnir (half-dragon, half-human) appears as the animalistic side of the human soul, the treacherous Regin as the cold

It is exactly the possible association of these carvings with funerary monuments which initiated another trend in interpretation. Collingwood, following Calverly, interpreted the Sigurd carvings as some form of ancestry claims, and suggested that Tostig, Earl of Northumbria, who claimed ancestry from Sigurd, had a special influence on the spreading of the story (Bailey 1980, 122-23). But Tostig was not the only one who saw himself as a descendant of Sigurd, and the locations of the carvings suggest a much wider popularity than Tostig's landholdings. According to R. Bailey (1981, 86) Sigurd's presence "may represent some claim to a distinguished ancestry or it may be a conventional method of praising a dead man to compare him to a great hero of old."

Originally the story of Sigurd (and the Völsungs) was centered around three motifs: *gold* (as it is evident from the numerous references to this legend when describing gold in kennings), a *fatal curse* which leads to the downfall of heroes, and finally *revenge* which goes through the entire story like a guiding thread. Later the emphasis shifted away from these three organizing narrative elements, and the legend became the story of a heroic individual fighting against evil (centered around the dragon-killing scene), which fitted the new Christian context better. It seem probable that the story of Sigurd lost its pagan association early on, and Sigurd became considered a historical character, thus his deeds (especially slaying the dragon) were seen just as realistic and acceptable for the Christian audience as those of any saint. (In fact, we have several examples from the British Isles for the euhemerized Celtic gods and goddesses being accepted in the Christian tradition "in the disguise" of or merged with a saint [e.g. the figure of St. Bridged].) This is of course by no means to suggest that Sigurd was ever seen as a saint. His unquestionably entertaining and adventurous story provided popular examples (as well as obvious narrative parallels) for the fight between good and evil, which made the legend not only popular, but also easy to tolerate for the Christian church.

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reason and intellect, and Sigurd as the individual hero who stands between them (cf. Lindholm 1969, 46-64).

THE FIGHT AGAINST EVIL: THE MIDGARD SERPENT; FENRIR THE WOLF; THE BOUND EVIL; "HART AND HOUND"

Having examined Sigurd as the heroic opponent of evil, it is time to take a closer look at his adversary, that is the various representations of evil and further possible associations with and depictions of the struggle between good and evil. The overcoming of evil has been a central theme in every mythological system, thus it is the easiest concept to find parallels for in a new culture and world-view encountered. However, as opposed to Christianity, no absolute good and absolute evil existed in Germanic mythology,[58] thus a certain degree of reinterpretation and shift of emphasis was need to be able to draw parallels between the Germanic and Christian stories.

The evil in Norse mythology is associated with Loki and his three offspring whom he conceived with the giantess Angrboða: the Midgard serpent, Fenrir the wolf, and Hel. While the serpent and Fenrir are undoubtedly negative characters who endanger the existence of the gods, Hel is entrusted by Odin to guard the underworld. The frightening presence of the former two demonic creatures is a portent of the instability of the world of the gods, and the god's attempts to control them are all pre-stories leading up to the apocalypse. The fight between the gods (Æsir) and Loki and his offspring escalates in the Ragnarök and leads to the destruction of the world of gods and men (cf. next chapter).

The Midgard serpent

In Germanic mythology the serpentine enemy appears in the form of the Midgard serpent that resides in the sea encircling the world. It is called by Snorri and in a few other texts the *miðgarðsormr* 'world serpent', and in eddic and skaldic poetry it is referred to as a (giant) serpent, dragon, snake, or fish. The narrative role of the Midgard serpent in Nordic mythology is defined by its eternal struggle with Thor, its chief adversary. Three encounters are reported in the literary sources. The first encounter is only mentioned by Snorri in *Gylfaginning* 46-47. It occurs at Útdarðaloki's place in the form of a trial of strength/strength contest, where Thor is supposed to lift up a cat, in vain, which turns out to be the Midgard serpent in disguise. The second and most famous encounter is Thor's fishing adventure when he attempts to catch the serpent with an ox head as bait. The

struggle is known from a number of literary and visual sources, yet the outcome and minor details of the adventure are uncertain. According to Snorri (*Gylfaginning* 48; *Skáldskaparmál* 1), the serpent survives the encounter to return at Ragnarök, which seems to be the logical deduction of a conscious mythographer, rather than the original version of the story. The *Ragnarsdrápa* and other sources (*Húsdrápa*, Gamli Gnævaraðskáld's poem on Thor, probably the *Hymiskviða*, and even *Gylfaginning* 48 admits this possibility) report that Thor smashed the serpent's head with his hammer. Even though the uncertain ending of the story provided a logical problem for Snorri and later mythographers, the outcome of the fight is irrelevant in mythological terms. Archetypal encounters of good and bad forces, that is the elements of order and chaos, represented by chief adversaries, are usually repeated at the time of the apocalypse, independent of their former encounters. The return of the representations of evil is therefore not logically excluded by their defeat in former times (cf. also Heizmann 1999b, 424). Thus the third and final encounter happens, as expected, at Ragnarök, when Thor manages to kill the monster, but he dies himself from its poisonous breath (*Völuspá* 55-56; *Vafþrúðnismál* 51; *Skáldskaparmál* 1) (Heizmann 1999b; Simek 1995, 272-73 and 416-18).

The serpentine or dragon-shape of the Midgard monster, its association with the world-sea, and the act of fishing as a form of encounter with it recall a number of Christian parallels. The most obvious parallel is Leviathan, a water monster of old legends, originally associated with the crocodile. As a representative of original chaos and evil, the Old Testament describes it as a dragon and/or serpent that was overcome by Yahweh in ancient times.[59] The closest parallel to Thor's fishing is Job 41.1-2, which reports about catching Leviathan with a fishhook. The passage was already interpreted allegorically by Origen, who saw it as an example of *pia fraus*, a 'gentle deceit' played on Satan by Christ, in which Christ's human body served as a bait and his divine soul as fish-hook for Satan, identified here with Leviathan. Satan delivered Christ to the cross, which, however, fulfilled the divine plan of salvation (cf. Heizmann 1999b, 424-25). The allegory was very popular among the church fathers, and through the writings of Gregory

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[58] Even the dragon, the archetypal representation of evil, can appear in positive terms, for example, on Viking ships (cf. Lindholm 1969, 51).

[59] Cf. Isaiah 27.1: "Leviathan, the wriggling, twisting dragon," "the monster that lives in the sea"; Revelation 20.2: "He [an angel] seized the dragon, that ancient serpent -- that is, the Devil, or Satan -- and chained him up for a thousand years."; Psalm 74.14: "you crushed the heads of the monster Leviathan"; Job 3.8: about sourcerers know how to control Leviathan.; Psalm 104.26: "Leviathan, the sea-monster which you [Lord] made."

the Great (*Moralia in Iob* and *Homily 25*) it reached the British Isles[60] and Scandinavia. A clear evidence for the association of the Midgard serpent with Leviathan in the north is provided by the use of the term *Miðgarðrzormr* or *miðgarðar ormr* for Leviathan in the interlinear glosses of some homilies and the word *miðgarðrs ormr* for the dragon-shaped Satan in the *Niðrstigningar saga* (Hultgård 1990, 356; Heizmann 1999b, 425-28).

Psalm 74 mentions further "dragons in the waters," and Isaiah 51.9 gives scriptural references to the conquest of Rahab, the great sea monster, in ancient times. Sea monsters of the Celtic tradition, which show a number of resemblances with the Midgard serpent, were also incorporated into the Christian tradition of Ireland, and are mentioned for example in Adomnan's *Life of Columba*, Book II, where the saint subdues a water monster with the sign of the cross. In addition to Jahve's ancient and eternal fight with the monster(s) of chaos and evil, we find two further characters in the Christian lore who battle with a serpentine dragon, St. Michael and St. George. Obvious parallels with famous dragon slayers of Germanic legend have already been pointed out above.[61]

The Midgard serpent is of course not the only cruel serpent-dragon in the Germanic tradition. Níðhögg, the serpentine dragon of death, is known to live at the base of Yggdrasil and he gnaws on its roots (*Grímnismál* 32 and 35; *Gylfaginning* 15). He is also reported sucking the corpses of dead (*Völuspá* 39), and he will live on in the new world after Ragnarök (*Völuspá* 66). In the description of the post-apocalyptic world in Snorri's *Gylfaginning* 52, he appears as a Christianized instrument of punishment in Hvergelmir, part of the otherworld (Simek 1995, 293). The association of serpents and serpentine dragons (thus also Fafnir) with the world of the dead is also reflected in the popularity of serpentine ornaments on memorial stones raised for the dead, and we often find references to the association of the fire-spitting dragon living in a barrow (cf. the one in *Beowulf*) and the devouring death and the fire of punishment (cf. Davidson 1964, 161ff).

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[60] Cf. for example, Ælfric's use of the allegory on his homilies around the year 1000 (Thorpe 1844, 216-17; cited in Heizmann 1999b, 429).

[61] The significance of St. Michael's apocalyptic battle with the dragon is emphasized by Gregory the Great in *Hom. evang.* 2, 34, 9, which was also known in England, and discussed be Bede in connection with the Antichrist. (Foley and Holder 1999, 47)

Thor and the Midgard serpent: Thor's fishing adventure

Judging by the number of surviving literary and visual sources, it was Thor's fishing adventure that enjoyed the greatest popularity among the stories featuring the Midgard serpent. Thor, the god of thunder, the strongest of the Æsir, and the chief adversary of giants and the Midgard serpent, is the son of Odin and brother of Balder. According to the testimony of skaldic poetry and saga literature, he enjoyed a growing popularity in the later period, which is also demonstrated by a large number of geographical and personal names including the element Thor-. Towards the end of the heathen period, Thor, the standard Germanic hero, was considered to be the chief pagan counterpart of Christ, based on the opposition (and parallels) of the two warrior types (Davidson 1964, 73). Thor's association with the Christian God is also demonstrated by the title "High Thunderer" which is also used for the Christian God in a charter of Edward the Elder (10th c.) (Davidson 1964, 83). In spite of the popularity of his cult, however, Thor does not feature in Old English literature, unlike his father, Odin.

Thor's main attribute is his hammer, Mjöllnir. In the Viking period it became popular to wear Thor's hammer as an amulet, probably imitating Christians wearing a cross, which resembled the hammer in its form, as it is confirmed by double dies used both for making little crosses and hammers as pendants. Thor's other symbol, the swastika, is not dissimilar to a Christian cross either, and it often appears on cremation urns (Owen 1981, 25). An interesting analogy between Thor and his family and the Trinity is provided by the fact that Thor is the son of Odin, the main god.[62] Since Christ is seen both as the chief god (and it is clearly easier to grasp a human figure as god than the non-corporeal Father), and the son of God, both Odin and his sons Thor and Balder were associated with Christ, suggesting a creative interpretation of the Trinity through a network of analogies. The parallels between Thor's encounter with the Midgard serpent and the catching of the Leviathan further support his associative links with Christianity.

Sources and comparative visual material

The story of Thor's fishing for the Midgard Serpent was well known already before the year 1000, and it was also a popular motif in art. Two early poems,

[62] In a famous passage of his homily *De falsis diis*, Ælfric, applying the *interpretatio Romana*, tries to correct the Danes' "error" of thinking that Thor (i.e. Jove) was Odin's (i.e. Mercury's) son, referring to both pagan and Christian sources that testify that Jove was in truth Saturn's son.

Ragnarsdrápa by Bragi inn gamli Boddason (first half of 9th c.), describing narrative scenes on a decorated shield, and *Húsdrápa* by Ulfr Uggarson (10th c.), describing carvings in a hall, provide an early and direct link between the two genres. Further skaldic texts by Ölvir hnúfa (9th c.), Gamli gnæfaðarskáld (10th c.) and Eysteinn Valdason (ca. 1000), all known from manuscripts of the *Snorra Edda*, attest the popularity of the myth. All these poetic sources, as well as the surviving visual representations, concentrate on the dramatic moment of encounter between Thor and the serpent. They presuppose knowledge of the narrative context, which is only known to us from the semi-comic account of the *Hymiskviða* 17-24 of the *Poetic Edda* (first half of 12th c.) and Snorri's *Gylfaginning* 46-47. The latter shows a number of deviations from the other sources (see above) and goes back to skaldic poems as well as other sources.

The high number and great geographical variety of surviving visual representations testify the popularity of Thor's fishing adventure in a large area from Gotland to England over a period of several centuries. The eldest known representation of Thor's fishing[63] is on the Gotland picture stone *Ardre VIII*, dated to the eighth century, where we find two figures in a small boat. On the left there is a fishing line with a bait of undefinable form at the end. A second image in the lower part of the stone might be interpreted as a depiction of Thor's acquiring his bait, on oxhead (Lindquist 1941, 95f; cited in Heizmann 1999b, 419). The lower half of one face of the rune stone of *Altuna* (Uppland, Sweden; first half of 11th century) shows a single man in a boat. He is holding a hammer in his right hand and a think fishing line in his left that seems to have an animal head as bait. His left foot penetrates the bottom of the boat, which detail is recorded in Snorri's version of Thor's fishing adventure (*Gylfaginning* 48), where Thor pushed both his feet down through the boat to the bottom of the sea in order to stand firm when pulling up the serpent. The winding body of the monster is under the boat, biting on the bait. On a partially damaged Viking-period stone carving from *Hørdum* (Thy, Denmark) there are two figures in a boat. The one in the middle of the boat is holding a long fishing line, while the other figure on the left is about to cut it with an axe. The remains of the curving body of the serpent are visible in the lower half of the depiction.

[63] A pre-Viking metal mount from Solberga (Östergötland, Sweden), which slightly predates or is contemporary with the Gotland pictures stones, shows a man fishing from a boat, and a mermaid-like figure gripping the hook below the boat. (Wilson and Klindt-Jensen 1966, fig. 15) It might be an early representaion of Thor's fishing, but the mermaid-like female figure cannot be accounted for according to our knowledge of the story.

Besides the Gosforth 'Fishing Stone' (discussed below), two other monuments are known from the British Isles, both from the Isle of Man, which might be related to Thor's fishing. The so-called Thorwald's Cross (a fragmented slab with an incised cross) from *Kirk Andreas* (Kermode 102) is dated to the tenth century. Under the left arm of the incised cross it shows a bearded man holding a cross in his left and a square-shaped object, probably a book, in his right hand. There is a large fish hanging on his left that he is probably holding on a line. Below and above him are two knotted serpents. On the reverse side we find a depiction of the apocalyptic scene of Odin being devoured by Fenrir the wolf. Odin is identified by a spear and his raven, and his right foot is on the mouth of the canine monster, whose fettering is still visible at the bottom of the stone. The fishing scene does not resemble the other known depictions of Thor's fishing, since it is lacking a boat, the most important iconographical diagnostic feature of the scene, and the figure is holding a book, which plays no part is the story. The cross in his hand might recall the hammer of the usual depictions (cf. below), and the fish and the knotted serpents fit the scene too. In the iconographical context of the now known fragment of the slab we might suggest an interpretation of the scene as the catching of Leviathan, borrowing visual elements of the traditional depiction of Thor's fishing, thus creating a possible cross-reference between the two stories.

The interpretation of the other monument, a cross from *Bride* 124 (Kermode 97), is less certain. On the right of the cross stem on face A Kermode (1907, 180-85) identified Thor carrying the ox-head bait in his hand with which he is going to fish for the Midgard serpent, represented by the serpent forming the step-pattern border. However, Margeson (1983, 96) argues that the figure has a satchel on his chest and questions the identification of the object in his hand as the ox-head, thus the figure is more likely to have a Christian source. On face B Kermode identified the scene of Thor's battle with the serpent at Ragnarök, but due to the lack of any usual attributes of Thor, this identification seems uncertain.

Pre-Conquest sculpture from Northern England

There is only one stone from Northern England that has been identified with great certainty as depicting Thor's fishing for the Midgard serpent, and this is the famous 'Fishing Stone' from Gosforth. James Lang (1972, 241) hints at another monument, a

hogback fragment from Bolton-le-Sands, Lancashire, which shows on side A a large human demi-figure contending with the tail of a serpent (Lang 1984, 116). He interprets the scene as Thor's fishing for the World serpent or wrestling with it. Since none of the key iconographical elements of the story are represented here, such an identification is rather uncertain. Depictions of serpents are known from a number of Viking-age monuments (e.g. Gosforth 1, 5, 6; Bringham 5; Great Clifton 1; Lowther 4), and an association with the Midgard serpent in some of these cases is not to be excluded, but the common use of serpentine monsters as evil adversaries in art and the lack of narrative context in these depictions prevents us from identifying these carvings with any certainty as belonging to the iconography of the Midgard serpent.

Gosforth 6 (the 'Fishing Stone'), Cumbria (NY 073036), part of slab or frieze [first half of 10th c.]

Like five other monuments from Gosforth, this slab is the work of the Gosforth Master (Bailey and Lang 1975), and was probably part of a larger frieze. The only visible face of the stone, now built into the wall, is divided into two panels [fig. 25]. The lower panel shows two frontally depicted men in a boat, with topped mast between them. The figure on the right is holding an axe in his right hand, while the figure on the left is holding in his right a hammer-like object and in his left a thick fishing line with an animal's head at its end. Below the boat there are four large fish, in the right hand corner a loop which might have belonged to a serpentine body. The carving depicts Thor's fishing adventure with the giant Hymir. The two textual sources closest to the version depicted here are the *Hymiskviða* and Snorri's account, because they record the use of the ox head as bait, which is visible in the carving.

Above the scene and below the moulding separating the two panels is a knotted serpentine motif. The upper panel shows a quadruped, identified as a hart, struggling with one or two serpents. The hart's head, largely broken away, is turning backwards, and its front legs are fettered by the knotted body of one of the snakes, while the knot between its rear legs might represent the other serpent. Richard Bailey (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 108) sees it as the "knotted extension of its tail." The scene with the hart struggling with snakes represents a well-known symbol of Christ's battle with or victory over evil, where evil is depicted as a serpent. The opposition of hart and snake is already known from Pliny, and

Psalm 42.1 refers to the true believer as a deer longing for a stream of cool water. The motif of the hart struggling with serpents is also known from a non-Christian context in Scandinavia, e.g. on Gotland picture stones, silver coins from the first half of the ninth century, and the gold bracteate Skrydstrup-B (Heizmann 1999a, 245; 1999b, 430). According to classical and medieval belief, the hart knew the herbs against snakebite, thus the image refers to healing and victory over death and evil.

According to R. Bailey (1980, 132; Bailey and Cramp 1988, 109), the significance of the two panels lies in their complementary nature, and he interpreted it as "radical theological speculation," and a "commentary from one theological system on another" (1981, 87). In both panels the evil appears as a serpent, and the depictions focus on the struggle between good and evil. Since the hart and serpent motif is usually interpreted as depicting Christ's victory over evil, the uncertain outcome of Thor's fight has often been addressed in this context. The two possibilities are seemingly the following, If the fishing ends with the death of the serpent, a parallel could be seen between Thor and Christ as victorious adversaries of the serpentine evil. If, however, the Midgard serpent survives and escapes, one might suspect an intended opposition between the two theological systems, which would emphasize the victory of Christianity over Germanic paganism. This second reading is highly improbable for two reasons. First, the depiction focuses on the dramatic encounter itself, and so does the hart and serpent motif too, so it would be erroneous to shift the emphasis from the *struggle* between good and evil (a central theme of every mythology) to the *victory* of the good over evil (a rather questionable concept in the Germanic system of thought). The parallel is thus seen in the nature of the fight and not in the resemblance or opposition of its outcome. Second, an opposition of the two religious systems like that would not be in line with the mind of the Gosforth Master, which is known to us also from the Gosforth cross (see next chapter). The iconographical program of the cross also suggests as interest in parallels and analogies rather than in oppositions, and the Germanic scenes depicted there clearly refer to the pagan gods as heroes and "winners" (cf. the prominent position of Viðar paralleled with Christ).

Discussion

Thor's journey to the Midgard serpent is a series of transitions from the world of gods to that of the giant and then to the serpent who encircles the known world, and it is

also a transition from land to sea. In this context the giant acts as a mediator between the world of Thor and that of the monster. He has a double role in the action. On the one hand, he is a helper of Thor who makes the encounter possible, but on the other, he prevents its completion by cutting the line, thus he saves the cosmic balance (Meulengracht Sørensen 1986, 268-69). The giant is mentioned in all literary sources, except from two brief fragments. He is missing on the Altuna stone, but the reason might simply be that the carving represents only a reduced form of the myth concentrating on the encounter of the two chief adversaries. The presence of the giant, especially with an axe in his hand, suggests that the serpent survives. Snorri, however, combines the two different endings by having the giant cut the line, but also telling how Thor threw his hammer at the serpent.

The uncertainties in the narrative structure point towards a development of the myth. In the original version found in Bragi the outcome was probably undecided, but later a victorious ending with the death of the monster developed, similarly to the narratives of dragon fights (Meulengracht Sørensen 1986, 270). The first encounter between Thor and the serpent at Útgarðaloki's place is a variant of the fishing adventure with a focus on the encounter itself and the maintaining of the cosmic balance. In this context the serpent is not only a representative of evil in the binary opposition of good and evil, but also part of the cosmic order by being the boundary of the circular world. Therefore, Thor's fight with the serpent is an expression and confirmation of the balance of powers in the cosmic world. The original version of the myth expresses a confirmation of a cosmic order, which act can be repeated, because it is outside of time. Or as P. Meulengracht Sørensen put it, "it expresses a world picture in which time if reversible" (Meulengracht Sørensen 1986, 272). Snorri's linear time built on the concept of development and cause and effect is non-reversible, and the encounter becomes a logical prequel to the Ragnarök. The role of the Midgard serpent changes from being part of the cosmic balance to being the apocalyptic destroyer of the world. Snorri changes the atemporal perspective of the original (and eternal) struggle and integrates it into his irreversible sequence of time. Originally the story took place in mythic times and belonged to the beginning of the mythic sequence "as a confirmation of the cosmic order and perhaps as an introduction to Thor's role of protector of the world of god and men" (Meulengracht Sørensen 1986, 274). The Gosforth 'Fishing Stone', together with the other

visual sources, shows, in my opinion, an earlier understanding of the myth focusing on the encounter, and not on the outcome, which explains its matching with the hart and snake motif.

Fenrir the wolf

Loki's other offspring, Fenrir (or *Fenrisúlfr*), is a mythical monster in the shape of a wolf. He is genealogically related to the forces of chaos and death, and his existence represents a constant threat to the world of the Æsir. Similarly to the Midgard serpent, he is defined by his adversaries, and is involved in two major episodes in Norse mythology. The first key episode is Fenrir's fettering by Tyr, who appears as a sacrificial god rather than a heroic adversary by becoming the victim of the encounter. Fenrir's breaking free from his fetters marks the beginning of Ragnarök, when he meets his chief adversary, Odin himself, who finds his death by being devoured by the wolf. The Norse tradition of the eschatological events also mentions another canine monster, Garm, who shows several similarities with Fenrir, thus we cannot exclude a possible overlap between Tyr/Odin and Fenrir/Garm and their encounters with Tyr/Odin (Turville-Petre 1964, 281; Davidson 1964, 59; Heizmann 1999a, 232).

The chaining of Fenrir by Tyr

The most detailed and consistent account about Fenrir is given in Snorri's *Gylfaginning*, which provides us with a "biography" of the monster and reports about the gods' growing fear of him. They decide to tie him up, and after two unsuccessful attempts, they finally manage to bind him by using a magical fetter called Gleipnir (cf. Mhqv 21). However, the suspicious Fenrir only allows the gods to lay the fetter on him if one of them puts his hand into his jaws, as a pledge. Tyr, the only one among the gods who dares to approach the monster, puts his right hand into Fenrir's mouth and loses it when Fenrir realizes that he cannot break the magical fetter. Then the gods bind Fenrir on a rock and prop a sword in his jaws, which makes him howl terribly. Thus he lies fettered until Ragnarök, when he breaks free to kill Odin (cf. below).

Tyr, the heroic savior of the gods in this initial encounter with Fenrir, was well-known in England in the Anglo-Saxon period. It is an ancient deity, Tiw (or Tiwaz), the

god of sky, war, law and order, who survives in the figure of Tyr (although much of his role was taken over by Odin). The runic symbol ᛏ, representing the name of Tiw (also surviving in the word 'Tuesday'), has been found carved on weapons and funerary urns in England (Owen 1981, 28-29).

Even though only *Lokasenna* 38f alludes to the loss of Tyr's hand during the chaining of Fenrir, in Scandinavian literary sources he is often referred to as the *einhendi áss* 'one-handed god', which appears to indicate that it is an old feature in the myth, and also emphasizes the significance of Tyr's encounter with Fenrir. His role in the encounter is not heroic, but rather sacrificial, and he sacrifices himself in order to restore the cosmic order. That Tyr is not the chief adversary of Fenrir is also supported by the fact that in the Ragnarök events, as reported by Snorri, Fenrir destroys Odin, while Tyr finds his death in the encounter with another canine monster, Garm, who was also bound but broke free from his chains (cf. *Völuspá* 44, 49, 58). The exact relationship between Garm and Fenrir remains unclear. In Snorri's rationalized system of pairs of adversaries he appears as a clearly separate being, as the adversary of Tyr, but possibly it is only Snorri's contribution (Heizmann 1999a, 232; Simek 1993, 80). The obvious similarities between the two monsters (canine beings; bound to or in front of rocks and howling terribly; breaking free at Ragnarök) suggest a clear parallel, if not total identity of the two creatures, at least in the early sources.

Odin's death by Fenrir and other eschatological events

Fenrir's second appearance escalates in the fulfillment of his eschatological role as the destroyer of Odin. As one of the preliminary events to Ragnarök, he breaks free from his fetters and joins the forces of chaos, in order to kill Odin, as prophesied. He meets the chief god of the Æsir at the battle field called Vígríðr, the scene of the final battle, and kills him by devouring him (cf. *Gylfaginning* 34; *Völuspá* 53; Vm 52-53; Ls 58). Odin's death is cruelly revenged by his son Viðar, who puts his foot in the lower jaw of the monster and tears him apart by grabbing his upper jaw (cf. Vm 53). According to the *Völuspá* (55), which documents a different narrative tradition, Viðar stabs a sword into the monster's heart. In the eschatological context Snorri (*Gylfaginning* 12) mentions the wolves Scöll and Hati, the offsprings of Fenrir (also known from the *Grímnismál* and the *Völuspá*), who chase and will catch up with the Sun and the Moon respectively, as well as

two unnamed wolves who will swallow these two celestial bodies (Gylf 51). *Vafðrúðnismál* 47 records another variant of the story and attributes the swallowing of the Sun to Fenrir himself. Here we can observe Snorri's synthesizing and rationalizing efforts again, and we might suppose that the earlier sources recorded different narrative traditions about the offsprings of Fenrir and their relation to the Sun and the Moon (cf. Heizmann 1999a, 232-34).

Visual comparative material

The earliest visual representations of Fenrir (from the first century AD) were found on gold brakteats. Trollhättan-B in Västergötland, Sweden depicts Tyr's sacrifice, while Skrydstrup-B in Jütland, Denmark) shows Fenrir's encounter with Odin at Ragnarök. The bodily posture of the canine monster as well as the accompanying "hart and snake" motif and runic inscription on the latter object suggest that Odin victoriously survives the encounter (cf. discussion below) (discussed in detail in Heizmann 1999a, 244ff). In spite of the frequent references to Fenrir and his offsprings in Norse literary sources, there is no single undisputed visual representation surviving from Viking-age Scandinavia. The early eleventh-century rune stone from *Ledberg* (Östergötland, Sweden), depicting a warrior in a helmet whose foot is in the mouth of a canine beast under him, and a second warrior at the bottom of the shaft, has sometimes been interpreted as a depiction of Odin's encounter with Fenrir at Ragnarök, but due to the lack of any specific iconographical details, it could just as well depict a scene of the battle mentioned in the accompanying runic inscription (Heizmann 1999a, 235). A man being swallowed by a snake-like animal on one of the Mammen horse collars could also represent Odin being swallowed by Fenrir (Wilson and Klindt-Jensen 1966, 100, and pl. xxxvi a), but the serpentine feature of the animal makes this reading questionable. Later depictions of Fenrir from Scandinavia are found in paper manuscripts of the Prose Edda from Iceland, but they all exceed the limits of the present study due to their late date (17th and 18th centuries) (cf. Heizmann 1999a, 235).

Viking-age representations of Fenrir are known only from the Scandinavian settlement areas of the British Isles. On the so-called Thorwald's Cross from *Kirk Andreas* (Kermode no. 102) in the Isle of Man, Fenrir appears attacking Odin at Ragnarök. The broken slab shows under the right arm of the incised cross a male figure with a bird of

prey (possibly a raven or eagle) on his shoulder and a spear in his hand. He is attacked by a canine beast from below, and his foot is already in the beast's mouth. Since the bird of prey and the spear are both attributes of Odin, the above-suggested Ragnarök scene seems plausible. However, we cannot entirely exclude Axel Olrik's reading of Viðar either, which was based on the detail of the human figure's left hand touching the beast's upper jaw (Olrik 1922, 10f, cited in Heizmann 1999a, 236). The iconography of the other side of the slab (discussed above) shows the fishing of the Leviathan, which might suggest the superiority of Christianity over the old religion by juxtaposing the failure and death of Odin in the fight against Fenrir and the successful fight against Leviathan.[64]

Pre-Conquest sculpture from Northern England

Both episodes involving Fenrir are documented on Viking-age carvings in Northern England. While only one monument, a hogback in Sockburn, depicts Tyr's sacrifice with some certainty, the majority of the carvings relate the Ragnarök events and depict either Odin being devoured by Fenrir or Viðar's avenging his father's death.

I. Tyr's sacrifice

Sockburn 21, Co. Durham (NZ 349070), hogback [last quarter of the 9th to first quarter of the 10th century]

Both long sides of this rather worn hogback stone are decorated with the same scene: a frontal human figure, possibly naked, flanked by two canine beasts. The rest of the panels are filled with other smaller quadruped beasts. On face A [fig. 26] the human figure is slightly left of center and his arms are extended towards the two beasts on his two sides. His right hand is in the jaws of one of the beasts, while his left hand is below the large open mouth of another one. One of the quadrupeds on the left seems to be bound by a chain-like fetter which rises up to touch the right side of the man, but this "chain" might also be the continuation of the tail of another beast (Cramp 1984, 143). The beast nearest to the man on the right might also be fettered. Similarly, face C [fig. 27] also shows a man in the center with outstretched arms and flanked by three beast on both sides. One of the beasts on the left is bound, and its gaping jaws touch the right hand of

[64] A further insular piece of evidence for the role of wolves at Ragnarök is provided by a hogback from Tyninghame in East Lothian, now in the National Museum of Scotland, showing two canine beasts flanking

the man. The human figure is either holding a dagger or the end of a chain that encircles the front and back legs of the beast on his right (Cramp 1984, 143).

Side A most probably depicts Tyr sacrificing his right hand when fettering Fenrir. The other large beast might represent the hound Garm who kills Tyr at Ragnarök, who can easily be Fenrir by another name. In that case we would have a combined representation of Tyr's two encounters with the canine beast (or beasts). The other beasts may be free animal carvings to fill up the panel or the beasts who join the wolf at Ragnarök (Lang 1972, 238-40). Side C represents a similar scene, but not necessarily the same. Not only would it be superfluous to depict the same scene twice, but by interpreting it as the same scene, we also cannot account for the man's holding a dagger or a chain. The popular theme of the Lord of the Animals could also be a possible solution, and "one could have a theoretic contrast here" (Cramp 1984, 144).

The earliest interpreters, W.H. Knowles and C.C. Hodges, identified the scene as "possibly" Daniel in the lion's den (Lang 1972, 238), and it was also thought to depict Adam naming the animals. The prominent position of the man's right hand placed into the beast's mouth on side A suggests that the depiction is more than just a generic "man flanked by beasts" pattern, which is otherwise well-known from insular, Scandinavian, and Irish art, thus the binding of Fenrir by Tyr seems to be an acceptable reading for side A.

Forcett 4, North Riding (NZ 175123), shaft fragment [first half of 10th c.]

Only one side is visible today of a worn shaft fragment built into the west wall of the porch of Forcett [fig. 28]. The fragment is decorated with clumsy free-hand carving displaying a frontal human figure in the middle with a double halo or more probably a large hood. On his right there is a small quadruped, possible a dog, and he is extending his left hand horizontally above it. There is a slight possibility that the carving represents Tyr and Fenrir, but it is rather improbable. Another (equally uncertain) reading could be God the Father with the *Agnus Dei* (Lang 2001, 111).

II. The Ragnarök events

Gosforth 1, Cumbria (NY 073036), cross [first half of 10th c.]

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and laying their forepaws upon a sphere. The motif was interpreted by Mr. A. Fenton as the wolves who

In the upper part of the eastern face (C) of the famous Gosforth cross (discussed in detail in the next chapter) there are two interlaced beasts with canine heads, one facing the top, the other the bottom [figs. 29 and 33]. The jaws of the lower head is spread by a human figure who is putting his foot in the beast's mouth, while pushing the upper jaw upwards with his hand. In his other hand he is holding a spear. It is generally accepted that the carving depicts Viðar avenging his father's, Odin's, death, even though early interpreters put forward a Christian reading of Christ opening the mouth of the beast of Hell (or the Harrowing of Hell). S. Bugge and G. Dumézil suggested a mixing of the two traditions, both representing the victory of a young god over the forces of death and evil (Heizmann 1999a, 239). An intended parallel between Christ on the cross (located at the bottom of the same face) and Viðar seem quite certain in the light of the overall iconographical program of the entire cross, nonetheless, a double (pagan and Christian) reading of the present image is improbable.

Another (much debated) canine animal (wolf or dog) appears on side B (south), situated towards the lower half of the face above the image of a horseman holding a spear [figs. 31 and 32]. The beast is depicted vertically, as if running upwards. Next to it are intertwined serpents, and above it a hart. The canine beast has been interpreted as a possible depiction of Fenrir or Garm, and the horseman below it as Odin. The lack of any further distinctive iconographical element, however, makes this interpretation uncertain.[65] Only the small figure killing a serpentine beast at the very bottom of the face, possibly interpreted as the killing of the Midgard serpent, may offer a vague contextual support of this interpretation by suggesting a parallel between the two beasts of chaos, both offsprings of Loki (depicted on side A).

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consume the sun and the moon at Ragnarök (cf. Stevenson 1959, 47; cited in Lang 1972, 241).

[65] An interesting (although maybe far-fetched) parallel between this image and the gold brakteat Skrudstrup-B (see above) should be noted here. The iconography of the brakteat (discussed in Heizmann 1999a, 244ff) also shows an upwards running canine, interpreted as Fenrir, Odin (identified by two accompanying birds of prey), and a hart stepping on two intertwined serpents. The image depicts Fenrir's encounter with Odin at Ragnarök and his devouring him, while the 'hart and snake' motif with the accompanying runic inscription *laukaR* 'leek' points towards the cleansing and renewal of the world of gods after Ragnarök. Whether the Gosforth artist purposefully used this iconographical pattern, and the hound could indeed be interpreted as Fenrir or Garmr and the rider as Odin is, however, highly questionable.

Ovingham 1, Northumberland (NZ 085637), upper part of cross-shaft [late 10th to early11th c.]

The very worn and damaged fragment of a cross-shaft from Ovingham displays the portrait of a saint or Christ with a book (and possibly a bird) on side A, and an interesting and unusual iconography on side C [fig. 36]. It shows a man with a large horn or club on the right and another figure in semi-profile on the left holding a beast that reaches towards a disk between the heads of the two figures. The figure on the left either has a hat or has very long hair knotted at his neck and falling down his back. The scene has been interpreted variously. Richard Bailey (1980, 133) suggested that the carving represented a Ragnarök scene with Fenrir (or another wolf) swallowing the Sun (represented by the disk in the middle), accompanied by Loki bursting his bounds (left) and Heimdall with his horn (right). Instead of Loki, the third figure in the first interpretation is more likely to be Viðar, who avenged his father's death, nonetheless, the grouping of these three figures is unique. Rosemary Cramp put forward a Christian reading, interpreting the scene as David, Goliath with a club, and a lion (Cramp 1984, 216). The image might also represent a simple hunting scene with a leashed hound. Since the monument is only a fragment, the original iconographical program remains unknown and thus any interpretation uncertain.

Skipwith 1, East Riding (SE 657385), architectural slab with graffiti [9th to 11th c.]

A poorly executed slab with an incised graffiti from Skipwith [fig. 37] shows a confused group of warriors in helmets and animals. On the left a large male human figure with outstretched arms is facing right. In the middle, below his left arm, another man in a cap or helmet is being swallowed by a large canine beast (his foot is already in its mouth). Between the human's arm and the beast's back is a serpent attacking the first man in his armpit. Further smaller human figures are visible at the bottom and on the right. There may also be a frontal human mask of the Middleton style and a Crucifix on the right hand side of the carving (Lang 1991, 214).

It has been suggested that the slab depicts scenes of the Ragnarök. The image of a canine beast biting the foot of a human recalls the depiction from Ledberg, Sweden, and possibly depicts Odin being devoured by Fenrir. The human figure with the serpent could represent Thor and the Midgard serpent, while the other warriors might represent the

einherjar, Odin's warriors at the final battle. If the scratchings on the right indeed show a Crucifixion, the iconographical program of the stone would represent a parallel to that of the Gosforth cross (discussed below).

Discussion

According to the testimony of insular visual representations of Fenrir and his encounters with Tyr and Odin, we might suppose a narrative tradition slightly different from the one represented in the later Norse literary sources. The uncertainties surrounding the iconography of almost all monuments listed above does not allow us to reconstruct the details of the insular versions of these stories, but the two key episodes involving Fenrir (the fettering by Tyr and his encounter with Odin and later with Viðar at Ragnarök) seem to have featured prominently also in Viking-age English tradition. The skaldic poem *Eiríksmál*, probably composed in Orkney by a follower of Erik Bloodaxe, mentions "the grey wolf [...] gazing upon the abodes of the gods" (Kershaw 1922, 96-97), ready to attack any time. This suggests that the eschatological role of Fenrir was certainly known among the Scandinavian settlers of England in the tenth century.

The two episodes involving Fenrir, although often handled separately, form two parts of the same narrative sequence, which points towards the eschatological role of the wolf as the representative of death and destruction who becomes an instrument of recreation and cleansing. His fettering by the gods and Tyr's sacrifice are attempts to secure the cosmic order, and they correspond in their mythological role to the fishing of the Midgard serpent. Both the serpent and the wolf are instruments of destruction, and Fenrir plays a prominent role by destroying the chief god of the pantheon as well as the central celestial body, the Sun (according to the *Vafþrúðnismál*). The final destruction at Ragnarök however is only the prerequisite of a new beginning, the emerging of a new world. Odin's death by being devoured recalls other mythological heroes' fates (most notably of Jonah, and its typological parallel in the Harrowing of Hell), whose "deaths" were followed by a rebirth into a better life.[66] After his death at Ragnarök, Odin is avenged by and thus survives in his son, Viðar, who becomes the ruler of the new world, and also the Sun bears a daughter to follow in her path. The iconography of the gold

[66] Fenrir's name, related to Old Norse *fen* meaning 'moor, lake or sea', suggests a link with monsters of destruction and death known from other mythologies, which usually abide in the sea. Fenrir might represent

SZTE Egyetemi Könyvtár SZEGED 14.

brakteat Skrydstrup-B also supports this idea of victorious renewal and rebirth (cf. Heizmann 1999a, 244ff). Odin's (as well as the other gods') death is a self-sacrifice, and with the destruction of the forces of chaos it becomes a victory over death, which enables a new beginning. Odin's sacrificial death at Ragnarök is not his first self-sacrifice. According to the *Völuspá*, he hangs himself on Yggdrasil, the world tree, in order to receive the secret knowledge of the runes. His sacrificial death is an initiation ritual that also marks the beginning of a new existence or era. In a Christian context this view of eternal (or recurring) rebirth becomes reinterpreted and adjusted to the linear and teleological view of time, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter in the context of the Ragnarök events.

The struggle of gods and heroes with various beasts has long served as patterns to depict the encounter of Good and Evil in general. Images of human figures fighting with serpents or beasts were highly popular both in Scandinavian and insular art, but no particular mythological stories known to us can be associated with them. In spite of their frequency, they will be left out of the discussion here, and we turn to two other representation, the image of the Bound Evil and the "hart and hound" motif, both of which have been associated with the depiction of evil. They enjoyed considerable popularity in insular stone carvings of the Viking period, however, their interpretation rather raises questions than offers solutions.

The Bound Evil

The image of the Bound Evil (or Bound Devil) was a popular representation of the victory over Evil both in literature and art, and often appears in various depictions of Hell or the Apocalypse. The biblical passage referring to the binding of Satan is Revelation 20.2, where he is described as a serpentine dragon bound. The Anglo-Saxon concept of Hell, largely based on apocryphal sources and including a number of local innovations in visual representations, also includes the image of Satan bound, usually surrounded by snakes, adders, and serpentine beasts. The Old English poem *Genesis B* (ll. 371-85) (Krapp 1931, 14-15) describes Satan in Hell as bound in iron bonds, fettered at his feet, hands, and neck. Tenth- and eleventh-century insular manuscript illuminators of the

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a land-version of the same beast, which also appears in sixth-century psalters as a guardian of Hell.

South made use of this image frequently,[67] and we also find it in a number of continental manuscripts, for example, of the commentary on the Apocalypse by Beatus Liébana, or in the Bamberg Apocalypse (ca. 1000), where false prophets are also chained in Hell.

The concept of the Bound Evil found obvious pagan parallels in Anglo-Saxon England, which supported the popularity of the image and also provided a well-known iconographical pattern.[68] In Germanic mythology there are two evil-doers who become fettered by the gods, but break free at the end of time, at Ragnarök: Fenrir[69] and Loki. Fenrir's fettering by Tyr has been discussed above, together with its visual representations. Loki's binding as a punishment for Balder's murder precedes the Ragnarök events and represents the gods' last attempt to preserve the cosmic order. It is recorded in most detail in *Gylfaginning* 49, and in a shorter form in the prose conclusion to *Lokasenna.* Allusions to it are found in *Lokasenna* 49 and 50 and in *Völuspá* 35 (Simek 1993, 197). According to the story, after Balder's murder the gods capture Loki with a trick and tie him to three stones in a cave with the intestines of his own son, Narfi. They fasten a poisonous snake above his head whose venom drips on his face. Loki's wife, Sigyn, tries to catch up the venom in a bowl, but whenever she has to empty the bowl, the poison drips on his face and he shakes in his pain, which causes earthquakes. The only surviving illustration of the scene from Scandinavia is to be found on the eighth-century picture stone of *Ardre VIII*, Gotland, where Loki is depicted in the lower right hand corner lying within a frame and surrounded by four serpents. Sigyn is standing next to him with a beaker or horn in each hand, waiting to catch the snake's venom (Wilson and Klindt-Jensen 1966, 81-82).

Fettering or binding by rings and bars in insular and Scandinavian art also recalls the representation of two heroic figures discussed above, Gunnar and Weland. Even thought the method of binding appears to be the same in the visual representations (cf. for

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(Heizmann 1999a, 248)

[67] Cf., for example, the representation of Hell on page 20 of Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11 (ca. 1000), where Satan is depicted as a winged, nude figure with flaming hair, bound at his hands and feet over flames (cf. Ohlgren 1991, 15-16, Plate 5 on p. 13); or the Jannes and Mambres illustration from the *Marvels of the East* in British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B.v, fol. 87v, where the devil appears bound and intertwined with a dog-headed serpent (cf. Ohlgren 1991, 5-6, Plate 2 on p. 2). In the Harrowing of Hell image of an eleventh-century psalter in British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius C.vi, Christ tramples down the crooked and naked figure of Satan with his hands and feet ringed and fettered (Henderson 1972, 86-87).

[68] Fettering in general had a ritual significance in heathen Germanic culture, and the ability of laying and springing fetters is associated mainly with Odin. On the ritual of binding in general, see Eliade 1961, 92-124; on fetters in a Germanic context, see, for example, Davidson 1964, 63-64.

example, side B of the Sigurd Slab in Kirk Andreas, Isle of Man (Kermode no. 95) for Gunnar in the snake pit, and the Leeds crosses for Weland), an association of the Bound Evil with these two characters can clearly be excluded.[70]

Pre-Conquest sculpture from Northern England

Gosforth 1, Cumbria (NY 073036), cross [first half of 10th c.]

There is only one Viking-age insular carving where the bound figure can be associated with a particular narrative and can thus be identified with certainty as a character of Germanic mythology: this is the small image on side A (west) of the Gosforth cross [fig. 30]. The snake's head above the bound figure lying on his back and the accompanying female figure holding a bowl allows for a reading of this image as the fettered Loki with his wife, Sigyn. While all other representations of bound figures suggest a general representation of Evil by an iconographical pattern anchored in both pagan and Christian textual traditions, and thus allows for a mixing of the two traditions in one image, the bound Loki on the Gosforth cross clearly illustrates one particular story which is put in a Christian context by the overall iconographical program of the cross (discussed below).

Kirkby Stephen 1 (the 'Bound Devil Stone'), Westmorland, Cumbria (NY 775089), part of cross shaft [10th c.]

Face A of a cross shaft fragment from Kirkby Stephen [fig. 38] displays a large frontal male figure with broad shoulders and hanging arms, and legs shown in profile. He

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[69] Garm could of course also be mentioned here, but as we have seen above, it was closely associated with Fenrir, and might have even denoted the same creature.

[70] Binding also appears as a unique feature of Crucifixion iconography in Viking-age Scandinavia. Two unusual Crucifixion types, (a) when Christ is bound to the cross, and (b) when he is entwined by a scroll, have been discussed in the context of Christian iconographical traditions by Signe Horn Fuglesang (1981). As possible origins for Christ bound on the cross she suggests (1) the Anglo-Saxon stylization of garments, (2) the representations of a variety of mostly decorative figures whose limbs are entwined with ribbons or animals, and finally (3) the traditional iconographical representations of the thieves, St. Andrew, and other saints as bound to the cross. She rightly discards a direct link with the pagan tradition of the sacrifice of Odin and hanging as a punishment or sacrifice. However, the popularity of the representation of the bound Christ in the North, also present in the Old English poem *Judgement Day* which describes Christ as bound to the cross (also noted in Fuglesang 1981, 85), might have been reinforced by the significance of binding in general in the native tradition. According to Fuglesang, this unique representation seems to be "a purely pictorial type unconnected with theological ideas" (ibid., 86). The most unusual representation is on the Jelling stone, where Christ is entwined by a scroll and bound by rings. Whether this depiction has its origins in the Christian iconography and biblical tradition of vine scrolls, as suggested by Fuglesang (ibid., 87-89), or it was influenced by the native tradition, requires further investigation.

has a beard or a chin or neck running into the V-shaped neckline of his clothing. Attached to his head are two horn-like volutes. The figure is bound across his stomach as well as at his wrists and legs by rings attached to a circular strap. Between his feet is the apex of a band moulding, which might have been part of the scene below, now broken away.

The image is usually explained as depicting the Bound Evil, which is based partly on the interpretation of the volutes next to the head as horns. The lack of parallels for depicting the devil with horns turning downwards was pointed out by R. Bailey (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 121). Considering the unusual horns of the otherwise rather similar male figure on the Gainford shaft fragment (see below), the position of the horns may be of no significance for the identification of the image. Any further identification of the figure as Satan, Loki, or the damned in Hell seems not only impossible, but also unnecessary, considering the mixed origin of this iconographical pattern.

Gainford 4, Co. Durham (NZ 170168), upper part of cross-shaft [first half of 10th c.]

It is face C of the small fragment of a shaft from Gainford [fig. 39] that offers a parallel to the iconography of the Bound Evil. Similarly to the Kirkby Stephen depiction, it shows a frontal male figure with a beard or chin running into the V-shaped neckline of his clothing. He also has horn-like features on his head, but they are round, resembling curling hair or buns. The figure has broad shoulders, and he is holding an object (maybe a club or a hammer?) in his right hand while slightly slanting to the right. Through its close resemblance to the "Bound Devil" of Kirkby Stephen both in its iconographical features and execution, an interpretation of this carving as a representation of Evil seems probable. Since the panel is broken above the waistline of the figure, we have no way to know whether he was also bound or not.

Side B [fig. 40] offers an iconographical context which reinforces the above interpretation. It shows a bound canine, a dog or wolf, turning upward with its mouth gaping, as if it was howling. Above it is a large bird in profile attacking a snake. The bound canine beast can be interpreted as the bound Fenrir, as it is known from Chester-le-Street 11 (see below), in which case we would have complementing representations of Evil based on or associated with Norse mythology. Side A also shows a Scandinavian motif: a horseman, with his hair bound in a knot, bearing a spear. The missing part of the shaft would have probably revealed an interesting iconographical program.

Chester-le-Street 11, Co. Durham (NZ 276514), cross base [10th c.]

On side A of a rather worn fragment of a cross shaft from Chester-le-Street [fig. 41] we find a group of human figures standing over a bound animal. In the center there is a somewhat raised human figure in tunic, next to his face there is disc. On his left a bearded figure in profile is thrusting a staff into the face of the central figure. On the right another bearded figure is pointing a pole toward the waist of the man in the middle. Below their feet is a bound canine animal looking upwards. The scene has been interpreted variously in scholarly literature. Less likely seem to be the reading by G.F. Browne as the seed of Eve bruising the serpent's head (Browne 1883, 185-87, cited in Cramp 1984, 58) and the interpretation of the scene as the Massacre of the Innocents (ibid.). An interpretation of the image as a Crucifixion scene with the lance bearer and the sponge bearer and the sun or the moon at Christ's head seems more plausible. The large canine beast at the feet of the three figures represents the Bound Evil possibly in the form of the fettered Fenrir, offering a cross-reference between the two traditions, or giving an example of an obvious borrowing of an often-used iconographical pattern.

Great Clifton 1, Cumbria (NY 041296), part of cross shaft [10th c.]

The upper half of side A (broad) [fig. 42] consists of two parallel vertical rows of ornament. The left one is occupied by a ribbon beast ridden by a small human being and a second ribbon animal with a contoured body, while the right one shows irregular interlace and yet another ribbon animal. In the lower half of the shaft the double-strip organization of decoration is replaced by zoomorphic and figural motifs.

It is the human figure at the bottom of the panel [fig. 42] that interest us in the present context. He is bound in contoured zoomorphic interlace, and possibly there is a snake's head above his left ear. So far the carving could be interpreted as the bound Loki. However, two other iconographical elements make this interpretation highly questionable: the figure seems to have a halo and he is wearing a flared kirtle, and thus the image rather recalls the bound Christ (as depicted on Brigham 5 and on Harold Bluetooth's monument in Jelling, Denmark). A bound figure struggling with snakes might also imply a depiction of the Christian Hell (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 111). If the figure is indeed haloed, he could have been envisaged as a portrait of Christ triumphant (ibid.). Nevertheless, the

contemporary audience may well have recognized here a similarity with a scene from Scandinavian mythology.

Discussion

The only insular representation of a bound figure which can be associated with a narrative with some certainty is the small image on the Gosforth cross, where the accompanying figure, Loki's wife, provides additional information to identify the scene as Loki's punishment. All other depictions of the Bound Evil can only be interpreted as the representations of Evil in general, due to the lack of specific attributes, but we might suppose a strong reliance on the iconographical tradition of the depiction of Fenrir and Loki. In Kirkby Stephen and Gainford the images might have been based on representation of the bound Satan according to the Christian tradition, but influenced by the story of Loki. In the Scandinavian tradition horns are not associated with Loki (rather with Odin and Thor), thus they might have been a borrowing from Christian representations of the devil. The Chester-le-Street carving, being a canine beast, seems to go back to the depiction of Fenrir, and it is the iconographical context of the Crucifixion that identifies the image as a representation of evil in general.

A digression on the "hart and hound" motif

Even though the "hart and hound" motif appears frequently in Viking-age stone monuments from Yorkshire to Cumbria, its interpretation raises a number of questions and uncertainties, and it cannot be clearly linked with pagan Scandinavian tradition. Nonetheless, its popularity in the Viking settlement areas of Northern England and its association with the representation of good and evil make it a worthy candidate to be examined in this chapter.

The hart had symbolic significance both in Celtic (cf. Ross 1967, 333) and in Scandinavian paganism (cf. Turville-Petre 1964, 199 and 204-205) as well as in the Christian tradition (cf. Kirschbaum 1968-72, vol. II, 286-89). In Classical and medieval sources it was best known for its enmity to snakes, a feature that was often mentioned in bestiaries, encyclopedias, and treatises on nature. As a Christian symbol, the hart stands for Christ or the Christian believers, especially the disciples and saints, and it usually appears in combination either with a serpent or with a hound. In combination with a

hound, it symbolizes the Christian pursuit of the sinner, where the sinner is represented by the hart,[71] or the Christian soul attacked by the forces of evil. The scriptural source of the symbol of the hart as well as the "hart and hound" motif lies in the Psalter. In Psalm 41.2 the hart is described as seeking for a well of water, that is for the fountain of life (a theme elaborated on in length by Cassiodorus (Bailey 1977, 68)), while in Psalm 90 it is pursued by a horseman with two hounds. In his commentary Bede explains the hunters as referring to the devils (Bailey 1977, 68). The significance of the motif of the hart and the hound(s) is further supported by the fact that it is also mentioned in the very psalm quoted by Christ on the cross (Psalm 21.17), where the dogs appear as persecutors, the symbols of sins or devils. The medieval vulgate version of Psalm 21 also contains a reference to the hart, which was interpreted by Bede, following pseudo-Jerome, as Christ the Lord, and his persecutors (the hounds) as the Jews (cited in Bailey 1977, 69). This explanation adds a possible Christological meaning to the "hart and hound" motif as a symbol of Christ's passion.

The popularity of the "hart and hound" motif in the British Isles is demonstrated by the fact that it appears on a large number of carvings in stone. The earliest examples, dated to the eighth and ninth centuries, are from Pictish Scotland and Ireland (e.g. Govan, St. Vigeans, Burghead, Hillton of Cadboll in Scotland; Kells and Castledermot in Ireland (cf. Scott 1959, 283, fig. 3)), showing general hunt scenes containing a "hart and hound" motif. According to R. Bailey, the ultimate source of these depictions was presumably the representation of hunt scenes in early Christian Mediterranean art (Bailey 1977, 70). T.A. DuBois described these figural scenes on early Irish crosses, featuring horsemen, deer, and hunts, as aristocratic themes and explained their presence by the strong links of partonage between the nobility and monasteries and the royal character of many early Irish monks themselves (1999, 144-145). The iconography of these early Irish crosses spread to areas influenced by Irish Christianity, most notebaly the Isle of Man.

Among the pre-Viking monuments of the Isle of Man, the "hart and hound" motif appears on two cross slabs in Maughold (Kermode nos. 65 and 66), accompanied by large crosses. It continued to be a frequent motif also on Viking-period pieces, usually in conjunction with human figures and with other animals, and it appears on the *Bride* stone

[71] According to the twelfth-century *Hortus Deliciarum*, "the hunt of the Christian is the conversion of the sinners. These are represented by hares or goats or wild boars or stags. We pursue these beasts with dogs when we arouse their fears by preaching the word." (Henry 1965, 153-54, cited in Bailey 1977, 68)

(Kermode 97), on the Mal Lumkun slab at *Kirk Michael* (Kermode 104), as well as on the Joalf Cross slab at *Kirk Michael* (Kermode 105) and the Sandulf Cross at *Kirk Andreas* (Kermode 103) (Kermode 1907, 37 and 68; Margeson 1983, 99).

The most interesting contemporary non-sculptural evidence in a clearly Christian context is the illustration of Psalm 41 in the continental Utrecht Psalter, which later traveled to England to be copied there. In accordance with the psalm, it shows a hart coming to the water, but, deviating from the text, it is pursued by two hounds, the symbol of sins and evil. The *Beowulf* poet alludes to the Psalm in a similar way when he says that the hart, pursued by hounds, will give up its life on the bank rather than plunge into Grendel's mere.[72]

Viking-age sculptural evidence from Northern England

The "hart and hound" motif features on a relatively large number of carvings from the Viking period in various iconographical contexts, for example, in combination with narrative figural scenes, with serpents, or as part of hunt scenes. The most conclusive of all carvings is the cross shaft from Dacre, which provides additional insight into the possible interpretation of the "hart and hound" motif through its complex iconographical program. Therefore this monument will discussed in some detail, while the other carvings will only be presented below briefly in groups. (For detailed descriptions of these monuments see the relevant volumes of the *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture.*)

I. Hart and hound in the context of narrative figural scenes

Dacre 2, Cumbria (NY 460266), cross shaft detail [10th to 11th c.]

The broad face of the headless cross shaft from Dacre is divided into three panels [fig. 43]. In the lowest panel we find a large fruit-bearing tree with two human figures on its sides, a female on the left and a male on the right. The female figure, dressed, is reaching for a fruit, while a snake is coiling at her feet. The carving has been interpreted as the Fall of Man, and it is the only known Viking-age representation of this scene from England. In the middle panel there is a crudely cut quadruped, identified as a stag or hart by its distinct antlers, with a smaller canine animal with curving tail leaping onto its back.

[72] Pointed out to me by Dr Gale Owen-Crocker in private correspondence. The reference in *Beowulf* also indicates the familiarity of the Psalm and/or the "hart and hound" image if if could be used and understood in such an allusion.

The top panel can be divided into two parts. In the lower half, two human figures are holding hands, or reaching towards each other over a rectangular object. Above them is a large quadruped turning backwards. The scene depicts the Sacrifice of Isaac in a characteristically insular way. The animal above has been interpreted by R. Bailey (1977, 68) as a ram, a figure of Christ's sacrifice, which emphasizes the typological significance of the Isaac scene, and also provides a link with the Fall by referring to God's intervention in human affairs and His promise of redemption.

The "hart and hound" motif can be interpreted here as the symbol of the soul attacked by the forces of evil, which would perfectly fit between the depictions of the Fall of Man and the Sacrifice of Isaac, the latter showing God's help to mankind and the hope of redemption (Bailey 1977, 68). Dacre was one of the three known pre-Viking monasteries of Cumbria (Bailey 1977, 70), thus a profound understanding of the full Christian significance of the "hart and hound" image and the iconographical program of the stone was indeed possible.

II. Hart and hound accompanied by serpent(s)

Lancaster, Lancashire (ca. SD 475615), cross shaft fragment

In the upper part of one of the broad faces of a cross shaft fragment from Lancaster (Scott 1959, 281, fig. 1) a hart appears with large antlers and spiral hips, with a small hound leaping onto his back. The hart is also surrounded by a number of smaller snakes at its legs as above its back. The lower part shows a great decorative knot of serpents.

Forcett 1, North Riding (NZ 175123), shaft fragment [late 9th to mid-10th c.]

In the upper half of face C [fig. 44] there is a "hart and hound" motif, facing left, below it a long, tightly coiled serpent with its head on the top right. Face A shows a lorgnette cross, the upper half of which is surrounded by three quadrupeds, probably boars with spinal ridges. While the combination of the "hart and hound" motif with a serpent appears frequently on Anglo-Scandinavian carvings, the depictions of boars, generally associated with Freyr, is unusual. According to R. Cramp, the stone might have been raised by a newly converted Scandinavian settler to proclaim his land right as well as his nominal conversion (Lang 2001, 110).

The combination of stag, hound, and serpent also occurs in the lower half of face B of the ***Gosforth cross*** (discussed above; also see next chapter), but there the stag stands alone, and the hound, dog, or wolf is actually involved with the serpents.

III. Hart and hound as part of a hunt scene

Heysham, Lancashire (ca. SD 415615), hogback [10th c.]

On one side of the Heysham hogback [fig. 24] the "hart and hound" motif appears in the middle as part of a larger hunt scene (cf. Lang 1984, 138-39; Collingwood 1927, fig. 207). The hart has visible antlers, the smaller animal on its back a curved tail. They are surrounded on both sides by two beasts, probably a pack of hounds, the lower and larger ones of which have unusually long tails. Towards the ends of the hogback there are two human figures on each side, holding their hands up. Towards the top (roof) of the hogback a lying human figure is depicted with a small quadruped, probably a hound or wolf, at his feet. The other side of the monument is probably associated with the Sigurd iconography (see above).

Middleton 1, North Riding (SE 783855), cross [10th c.]

Face A of the Middleton cross [fig. 45] shows the "hart and hound" motif as part of a larger hunt scene. The single large panel below the cross head depicts in the upper right hand corner a warrior with a spear in his right hand, and with his left ready to draw a knife from its sheath. Along the left edge of the panel and on the left of the human figure there are two hounds running downwards, the upper one somewhat smaller. At the bottom there is a naturalistic stag with large antlers, facing to the right. The scene depicts a stag hunt.[73]

Ellerburn 5, North Riding (SE 842843), fragment of cross shaft [10th c.]

The very worn shaft fragment of Ellerburn [fig. 46], now built into the wall, shows within the panel at the base a naturalistic profile quadruped, facing to the left, a

[73] Another stag hunt depiction survives in Eastern Yorkshire on the worn fragment of a grave cover in Stonegrave (no. 7). It shows a human figure with a bow and arrow and a stag. There is an indistinct form over the stag's back which might have once been a hound, but it is rather uncertain, therefore this monument was left out of the present discussion.

smaller quadruped above its, and the legs of a third animal (Lang 1991, 128). The scene either depicts the "hart and hound" motif or a stag hunt.

IV. Hart and hound without identifiable context

Wath 4, North Riding (SE 325772), shaft fragment [first half of 10th c.]

On the only visible face of a badly damaged shaft fragment from Wath [fig. 47], there is a large quadruped facing left; it head is broken away. A smaller canine beast is crouching on its back. The carving depicts an example of the "hart and hound" motif, but due to its damaged condition, no further iconographical context can be identified.

Kirklevington 11, North Riding (NZ 432098), shaft fragment(?) [first half of 10th c.]

The Kirklevington fragment, now built into the wall, also has only one face visible [fig. 48]. It shows a profile stag with distinct antlers, facing left. Over its back is the front half of a small leaping beast. The image clearly depicts the "hart and hound" motif, but any further context is impossible to establish.

Melsonby 3, North Riding (NZ 201085), fragment [mid-9th to mid-10th c.]

The small fragment from Melsonby [fig. 49] shows two animals. The larger one is a quadruped facing left, with long horn-like features on its head, which might be interpreted as antlers. The other animal is crouching over the back of the quadruped, but only its legs and torso are visible. W.G. Collingwood considered it as a "hart and hound" depiction, while R. Bailey was less convinced (Lang 2001, 177).

Sockburn 7, Co. Durham (NZ 349070), part of cross shaft [third quarter of 10th c.]

The upper part of the cross shaft of Sockburn is missing, therefore only three panels are visible both on sides A and C. The upper panel on side A [fig. 50] displays an interlace pattern. The middle panel is occupied by a standing warrior figure facing left. He has a pointed helmet and a sword attached to his waist, and he is holding an upright spear. The lower panel shows a stag with long antlers, also facing left.

The upper panel of side C [fig. 51] is almost identical with that of side A, and the middle panel has an interlace knot. It is the lowest panel that seems to be the pair of the

stag on side A: it shows a large hound with a short tail and a pointy ear, turning his head backwards (toward the left).

V. Hart alone

Brompton 4, North Riding (SE 374964), shaft fragment [first half of 10th c.]

On face A of the Brompton shaft fragment [fig. 52] a solitary stag with large antlers appears in the upper panel, accompanied by a backward-turning quadruped in the lower panel. Face C shows a crudely cut frontal male figure, probably a warrior, with a sword or staff in one hand, and with the other hand held across his body. The figure is a later recarving. The hart greatly resembles Kirklevington 11, but the figure of the hound is missing here.

Stanwick 9, North Riding (NZ 185119), grave marker or cover fragment [first half of 10th c.]

The carving is badly damaged and worn, and since it is built into the wall, only one face is visible [fig. 53]. It shows the front half of a naturalistic stag with antlers, facing right. It may have been part of a "hart and hound" scene, but the rest of the carving is broken away.

Discussion

In spite of the popularity of the "hart and hound" motif in Scotland, Ireland, and the Isle of Man in the pre-Viking period, there is no evidence of any pre-Viking usage of this pattern in Northumbria. The distribution of the "hart and hound" motif exclusively in areas of Viking settlement suggests that it was introduced in Northern England by the Norse settlers coming from Ireland in the tenth century. This is supported by the fact that the Manx and English carvings share exclusive stylistic links (Bailey 1977, 70-71). Many of the above-listed monuments also show Irish influence in their style, execution, or choice of motifs (e.g. Dacre 2, Kirklevington 11, Stanwick 9, etc.).

In the light of the iconographical evidence, both a secular and a Christian interpretation of the motif seem possible. The popularity of the psalms as part of the daily liturgy might have promoted the Christian interpretation of the image in certain areas, for example in Dacre, but since the Yorkshire examples are not associated with known

monastic sites (Lang 2001, 146), a secular interpretation of the motif as a hunt scene would seem equally probable. However, as far as the execution of these carvings is concerned, they are always accomplished in freestyle, which is usually reserved for narrative, illustrative, or symbolic scenes (Lang 1978, 18; Lang 2001, 34). Also, the "hart and hound" motif often appears in combination with serpents, either accompanying the hart in the same image, or featuring as a dominant image (e.g. as a large coiled serpent or a knot) in a separate panel on the same monument. This frequent combination of the hart with both hounds and stags suggests that the meaning of the "hart and hound" and the "hart and serpent" motifs, usually carefully separated in Christian iconographical surveys, was similar or even the same, which has led to their mixing in the visual representations. One reason for that might have been that the serpent was a better-known representation of evil among the Anglo-Scandinavians,[74] thus its addition to the "hart and hound" motif clearly distinguished it from simple hunt depictions. Therefore a symbolic interpretation of the "hart and hound" motif as struggle between good and evil in general, with a heroic or pagan reference now lost to us, might also be an appropriate reading for the Viking-age examples.

[74] In Scandinavia hounds were known as domestic animals and they were often buried, together with horses, at ship burials (Davidson 1967, 130), however, no special sacred function can be attributed to them. In mythology, the only hound known is Garmr. (Simek 1993, 62)

RAGNARÖK

Stories about the beginning and the end of the world play prominent parts in every mythological system. The Ragnarök (ON, pl. 'final destiny of the gods'), the term used in the Poetic Edda to denote the eschatological story, is one of the central narratives of Norse mythology. The Ragnarök comprises a series of events, escalating in the final destruction of the world inhabited by gods and people, which have long remained in circulation even after the acceptance of Christianity. Some of the events pointing towards or directly leading up to Ragnarök, like Thor's fishing for the Midgard serpent, the fettering of Fenrir and later his breaking free, and the binding of Loki, have already been discussed above in details. The present chapter will concentrate on the Ragnarök events and their possible reinterpretation in a Christian context on the basis of a single outstanding insular monument, the Gosforth cross, parts of which have already been introduced above.

Sources and analogues

In spite of the significance and popularity of the eschatological narrative, the surviving narrative source material is rather scanty. The literary sources originate almost exclusively from Iceland and Norway, and many of them have almost certainly been influenced by Christianity. The eldest and best-known literary source is the *Völuspá*, which presents a more or less coherent eschatological concept. It goes back to an earlier (orally transmitted) lay, the date and original version of which are unknown. This early eschatological account have survived in three different versions: in stanzas 44-66 of the *Völuspá* in the Codex Regius of the Poetic Edda, in a few other stanzas in the *Hauksbók*, and as the (now lost) source of Snorri Sturluson's account on Ragnarök (*Gylfaginning* 51-53). The Codex Regius was written in the second half of the thirteenth century, Snorri's *Gylfaginning* around 1220, and the *Hauksbók* version in the early fourteenth century (1306-8). The composition of the lay as a distinctive piece of oral poetry is generally dated around the year 1000, which leaves a gap of about two hundred years of oral transmission before it was recorded in writing. That may explain the presence of elements of Christian visionary literature which may be detected in certain motifs in stanzas 36-39 (Simek 1995, 330-32 and 463-4; Simek and Pálsson 1987, 151-52; Hultgård 1990, 353).

Chapters 51-53 in Snorri's *Gylfaginning*, a commentated prose version of the *Völuspá* (as well as other sources), deserve special attention, because it gives the most complete description of the eschatological events. The original text has been slightly altered, and none of the surviving manuscripts seems to represent Snorri's original version. He describes the four central eschatological events of Ragnarök (the terrible winter; the all-destroying fire by Surt; the sinking of the earth in the surrounding ocean; and the darkening of the sun swallowed by Fenrir the wolf) alongside a number of other related scenes, as well as the emerging of a new world. Snorri was a conscious mythographer with a Christian background who systematized and rationalized the information he learned from his sources. Following the *Völuspá*, he included a passage on heaven and hell after the fall of the gods and the destruction of the world by fire. It has been interpreted as a Christian influence on his account, which has been extended by A. Olrik to other elements of his narrative as well, such as the moral decay of the world, the sounding of Gjallarhorn, the darkening of the sun, the world fire, and the emerging of the new world (Olrik 1922, cited in Simek 1995, 332).

Further allusions to eschatological events are known from *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Lokasenna*. The date of both lays is unknown. They had been transmitted orally in Iceland in Christian times and written down in the thirteenth century as parts of the Poetic Edda. There is a minor eschatological section also in *Hyndluljóð* (stanzas 42-44), presumably part of an independent poem known to Snorri as "the short Völuspá" (Hultgård 1990, 350). It was preserved in the Flateyarbók in the late fourteenth century, but it is presumably much older (cf. Snorri's use of the text) (Simek 1995, 208-9). Skaldic poetry also contains a number of allusions to the events of the Ragnarök. While the date and authorship of these skaldic stanzas can often be established, the context or a full narrative is usually missing, thus we have to rely on Snorri or the *Völuspá* to interpret these allusions.

Insular evidence

Taking the Scandinavian sources into account, there are a number of questions to be considered when interpreting the insular visual material. Did the Anglo-Saxons and the invading Scandinavians possess an eschatological tradition of similar extent and coherence as the one presented in Snorri? Were their traditions corresponding or were

there significant differences? Which narrative tradition is depicted on the Gosforth cross and related monuments? These are philological considerations that we need to keep in mind, but due to the lack of written narrative sources from the British Isles, we have to rely on Snorri's account and other surviving evidence of later date from Scandinavia to reconstruct the eschatological story.

A minor piece of insular literary evidence for the tenth-century Scandinavian settlers' acquaintance with the Ragnarök events is provided by the *Eiríksmál*, a skaldic poem composed in memory of Erik Bloodaxe. It mentions that heroes taken to Valhalla will take part in the final battle against the forces of evil at Ragnarök, but reveals no further details of the story.

Sculptural evidence from the Isle of Man provides further proof that events of the Ragnarök were known in the British Isles. The fragment of a cross slab from *Kirk Andreas* (Thorwald's Cross, Kermode no. 102) shows Odin being devoured by Fenrir (discussed above). On the other side of the slab, this scene is possibly counterbalanced by a Christian one, the fishing of the Leviathan. The unusual depiction of a man with a sword and what looks like a long Alpine horn on a cross slab fragment from *Jurby* (Kermode 99) possibly depicts Heimdall sounding his horn (Kermode 1907, 188),[75] a further episode of the eschatological events, also paralleled on the Gosforth cross.

Pre-Conquest stone monuments from Northern England

There are three carvings in Northern England surviving from the Viking period which depict events of the Ragnarök: a cross shaft fragment from *Ovingham* (no. 1, Northumberland), an architectural slab with graffiti from *Skipwith* (no. 1, Eastern Yorkshire), and the *Gosforth* cross (no. 1, Cumbria). Ovingham and Skipwith have already been discussed above in connection with the iconography of Fenrir.[76] Some parts of the Gosforth cross have also been examined, but its unique iconographical program deserves a full analysis. This should be the objective of the part to follow.

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[75] The position of the figure at the top of the slab between the cross arms recalls the Christian motif of cockerels at the top of other crosses (at Kirk Michael 129 (101), Bride 124 (97), and Kirk Andreas 131 (103)) (Margeson 1983, 96).

[76] Skipwith may be of special interest in the context of the Gosforth cross, since it might also display a Crucifixion, in which case the iconographical programs of the two monuments are similar.

Gosforth 1, Cumbria (NY 073036), cross [first half of 10th c.]

The magnificent cross at Gosforth [fig. 29], still standing *in situ*, is dated to the first half of the tenth century and was created by the so-called "Gosforth master," an anonymous sculptor responsible also for the other two figural carvings from Gosforth displaying similarly innovative iconography on a smaller scale (cf. the 'Fishing Stone' discussed above) (Bailey and Lang 1975).

In spite of the truly Christian nature of its form, the 442-cm-high cross has only one clearly Christian scene in the lower half of side C (east) [fig. 34]: a framed and crossless Crucifixion with a stream of blood running from Christ's right side. Christ's arms are outstretched and grip the frame. Below the frame a profile figure on the left, identified as Longinus, is thrusting a spear towards Christ's right side. He is facing a profile female figure with a trailing dress and knotted pigtail, holding an horn-like object in her hand. Below them are two entwined beasts with open jaws. Most of the other scenes on the cross refer to the Ragnarök or relevant mythological episodes leading up to it. The most obvious eschatological scene is the one on the upper part of the east face depicting Viðar's revenge of his father's, Odin's death (see above). It shows two interlaced beasts with large heads and gaping jaws, one facing up, the other facing down. A small human figure, Viðar, is depicted with his foot in the lower beast's jaw while pressing his hand to its upper jaw. In his other hand he is holding a spear. The arrangement of this side suggests a connection between this scene and the Crucifixion. Since Viðar is said to be the destroyer of the eschatological beast, Fenrir the wolf, the symbol of evil, as well as the divine savior and survivor who will rule the new world, his eschatological role is similar to that of Christ.

The second most conclusive side is A (west) [fig. 30], where the figural scene at the bottom shows the bound Loki with his wife Sigyn, who is catching up the snake's venom dripping on his face (see above). Above it is an upside-down horseman with a spear in his hand, paralleled by three others on faces B and D. The frontal male figure with a horn and a spear or staff on the same side (A) is Heimdall, whose Gjallarhorn marks the beginning of the final battle. He is facing a group of three beasts, two of which are facing downwards toward him, while the largest, ring-chain-bodied beast is facing upwards. All three have large heads with large teeth.

Besides these clearly recognizable scenes on the two dominant faces of the cross, further elements from the northern (D) and southern (B) sides may contribute to the pictorial narrative of Ragnarök. On side D (north) [fig. 35] the large ring-chain-bodied and winged beast facing downwards has been interpreted as Surt, the fire beast (giant) and apocalyptic enemy of Freyr (Bailey in Bailey and Cramp 1988, 102).[77] Below the beast's open jaws are two horseman, the lower one set upside-down. They are identical with the ones on sides A and B, and may recall both the pagan and the Christian apocalyptic battle scenes.

The iconography of face B (south) [figs. 31 and 32] is a little more ambiguous and problematic. In the upper part of the shaft there are two large beasts facing upwards. The head of the lower one is surrounded or bound by a ring or circle. Below the beasts is a hart facing right. Underneath is an upwards-running dog or wolf with a tangle of snakes next to it, below that a horseman with a spear. The latter has been interpreted as Odin with the wolf Garm above, but the panel also recalls associations with Fenrir through the wolf (especially in connection with Odin),[78] as well as the "hart and hound" and the "hart and snake" motifs (see above). At the very bottom of the panel, below an interlace divider, is a human figure either entangled or in fight with a serpentine shape. An interpretation of this scene as Thor's fight with the Midgard serpent is uncertain.

Discussion

The uniqueness of the Gosforth cross lies in its complex iconographical program built on a combination of scenes from the pagan Scandinavian and the Christian "end-times" or major bordering events. The basic parallel is suggested on side C, probably the principal face of the cross, through a visual pairing of the crucified Christ and the victorious Viðar. The extension of the parallel of these two scenes by a series of other mythological references in the iconographical program of the whole artifact implies a connection between the end of not only two, but three different worlds: (1) that of Odin

[77] It is hard to say whether the numerous beasts in the upper part of the shaft should really be identified with mythological characters or they are simply decorative ornaments as on many other Viking-age carvings. It is only this beast though its wings and the one on side C through the accompanying figure of Viðar which can with some certainty be identified with mythological monsters.

[78] The encircled head of the lower beast in the upper part of the shaft might be a depiction of Fenrir swallowing the sun (represented by the circle), although it would be a unique type of representation and clearly an unusual one. What is usually interpreted as entangled snakes next to the wolf or dog in the panel below has been suggested by H.R.E. Davidson (1950, 130) to represent discarded bonds, which would offer another link to Fenrir.

and the pagan gods (Ragnarök), (2) the end of the world of sin by the first coming of Christ, and (3) the apocalyptic end of the world (the second coming of Christ). These three events are paralleled with each other not only on the basis of being historical border events, but also by a series of concrete linking elements of a different kind. A detailed examination of these links reveals that the chronology of the Christian events (i.e. in our understanding the Crucifixion is clearly past and the Apocalypse is yet to come) becomes dissolved when Ragnarök is fused into the Christian tradition, and the three "ends" are presented as one fabric of events without reference to time – it is neither past, nor present, nor future. By utilizing the possibilities of visual representation as opposed to the temporally bound verbal presentation, the chronology and temporality of events in a modern sense is dissolved, and the three (from our perspective) historically distinct temporal layers are united, and the narratives mutually enrich each other.

The links or parallels implied in the iconographical program range from the shared eschatological role of characters (e.g. Viðar – Christ) through narrative parallels (e.g. binding the evil who later breaks free) to recurring natural phenomena (e.g. fire and earthquake). In the following these links that interconnect the three events will be examined in greater detail.

The Crucifixion image

The starting point of our examination should be the Crucifixion scene, the only Christian image on the cross. Its significance as a link between the different narratives is indicated visually in two ways: by a significant alteration in the traditional Crucifixion iconography, and by positioning this image on the same side as the Viðar-scene.

Traditional three-figure Crucifixion depictions show St. John and the Virgin Mary on the side of the crucified Christ. In extended Crucifixion representations, which are often found in early insular art, they are accompanied by the figures of the lance bearer and the sponge bearer, Longinus and Stephaton. In addition to the Virgin Mary, further female figures may also be present: either Mary Magdalene, or, frequently in Carolingian representations, the allegorical figures of Ecclesia and Synagogue (Kirschbaum 1968-72, II, 620-22). In the image on the Gosforth cross, Longinus can clearly be identified by his lance, but he is accompanied by a female figure, which deviates from the tradition. Berg (1958, 31) interpreted the latter figure as Ecclesia with a chalice, but then she should be

standing on Christ's right to catch up his blood. Bailey (1980, 130; Bailey and Cramp 1988, 102) suggested that she was Mary Magdalene holding an alabastron (her common attribute), in which case both attendant figures would represent converted heathens. Such a depiction of Mary Magdalene in the context of the Crucifixion would however be quite unusual. The representation of the female figure with a trailing dress, braided hair, and a horn-like object recalls Scandinavian depictions of valkyries receiving a dead warrior in Valhalla (cf. next chapter). Richards (2000, 163) suggested a combined representation of Mary Magdalene dressed as a valkyrie, which would bridge the two traditions. Following the logic of the iconography of the cross, we might propose that the figure is a valkyrie, without a secondary identification. The link with the Crucifixion scene is established through inserting the figure into the traditional iconographical pattern, implying a certain interpretation of the Crucifixion itself. In the light of her traditional role in Germanic mythology, the presence of a valkyrie may suggest (a) a connection between the Germanic and Christian places of afterlife, i.e. Valhalla and Heaven, (b) a parallel between Odin and Christ as lords of these places, and (c) an interpretation of Christ as a triumphant warrior hero received at Valhalla, an idea well known to us from Old English literature (cf. for example, *The Dream of the Rood*).

An association between Odin and Christ has long been suggested in scholarly literature on the basis on a number of similarities between the two characters. The Anglo-Saxon understanding of Christ as both triumphant warrior and sacrificial victim offers an obvious parallel to the two sides of Odin, the chief god of the (late-)Germanic pantheon. Odin was (among many others) the god of war and patron of heroic warriors. Those who died a violent death in the god's service, in battle or at sacrifice, he gathered in Valhalla, and they were to fight with him in the final battle at Ragnarök. Christ was not only seen as a triumphant warrior who deserved a place in "Valhalla," but also as a leader of his faithful followers. His death on the cross was however also seen as a self-sacrifice, which reminds us of Odin's ritual self-sacrifice on Yggdrasil to receive the runes (for a detailed discussion, cf. next chapter). Both Christ and Odin suffered his sacrificial death hung on a tree, which suggests a parallel between the cross as the world tree or the tree of life and its Germanic equivalent, Yggdrasil. The Old English poem *The Dream of the Rood* uses the words *treow* and *beam* with deliberate ambiguity to represent the cross of Christ's

crucifixion, which is first depicted as a tree growing in the forest.[79] Christ's death on the cross by a spear and the presence of the spear bearer in the Crucifixion depiction recall not only Odin's own ritual "death" on Yggdrasil (pierced by a spear), but also the ritual of dedication by spear (and hanging), a rite associated with Odin (cf. Davidson 1964, 51). The valkyrie standing there to receive the heroic victim in Valhalla is therefore logical in this context.

The new generation

Besides Odin, a number of other gods are also associated with Christ through his death and his return at the Apocalypse. The most obvious association is between Christ and Viðar, which is supported by the visual parallel and layout of side C.[80] Both characters are depicted as being involved in a concrete or symbolic fight with double-headed beasts: Viðar's foot is in the jaws of the beast, while the three-figure Crucifixion scene is positioned over an intertwined double-headed serpentine creature which could be a general reference to the defeated evil, as it is known from Carolingian and later art (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 101), but it might also contain a hint to the two beasts of the Apocalypse in Rev. 13. Viðar, son of the supreme god, is depicted avenging his father's death by killing the monster of Evil and Death. In this apocalyptic function he shows traits of a savior figure, and, similarly to Christ, he survives the Ragnarök and emerges triumphantly.

Some aspects of the figure of Christ recall another famous son of Odin, Balder, who does not appear on the cross, but whose death, which is considered to mark the beginning of the Ragnarök events, is implied by the depiction of Loki's punishment for his murder. The Son of God also suffered a forceful death on the cross as a result of treason, similarly to Balder's death, which was brought about by the treacherous Loki. Both god-sons go down to the otherworld (Hel vs. Hell) upon their deaths, but keep an "aspect of a living man" (Davidson 1964, 36) and return from the death to reign the new world. An association of Balder with Christ already appears in the Viking period (cf. Davidson 1964, 108-10), and it has often been pointed out that certain parts of the *Völuspá* might show Christian influence. The status of Balder as a god among the early

[79] Pointed out by Gale Owen-Crocker in private correspondence.

Anglo-Saxon heathens is doubtful, and it seems that the story of his murder as well as Loki's punishment were imported to England by the Viking settlers (Owen 1981, 26-27). There are two references in the *Dream of the Rood*, depicting Christ as a Germanic warrior, which might indicate an association of the Crucifixion with the story of Balder's death: "I was all wounded with darts" (line 62); and "All creation wept" (line 55) (noted in Owen 1981, 27-28). The function of these mythological references in a Christian poem might have been to enrich the Christian story by bringing closer the tragedy of Christ's heroic death to the contemporary audience, that is to generate empathy or *compunctio*.

The ends of worlds: Ragnarök and the Christian tradition

As it was pointed out above, the iconographical program of the cross brings together three different narratives about the end of worlds (or eras): the story of the Ragnarök, the end of the world of sin by Christ's death on the cross, and the Christian Apocalypse. In addition to the parallels with the figure of Christ himself, various other points of overlap or similarities between three narratives are hinted at on the other sides of the cross and underlie the choice of the remaining scenes.

The depiction of Heimdall with his horn on face A, referring to his sounding Gjallarhorn to mark the beginning of Ragnarök, recalls the trumpets of the Apocalypse. The bound Loki is depicted at the bottom of the same face. The significance of this scene in the present context is double. On the one hand, Loki is described as the leader of the evil forces at the final battle, and on the other, his association with earthquakes (his reaction to the pain caused by the venom being the folk explanation for earthquakes in the pagan north) recalls the literary references to earthquakes in both biblical narratives (Mt 27.54; Rev 6.12, 8.5, 11.13, 16.18). The iconography of the bound Loki, together with the bound wolf Fenrir, also recalls that of the "bound devil" of the Apocalypse (Rev. 20.2-3), which idea is further supported by the existence of a number of carvings from the period concentrating on this motif (see above). Fenrir himself is present on the cross (cf. his encounter with Viðar), and a parallel with the apocalyptic beasts has already been suggested above. Further parallels with the beasts of the Apocalypse may be seen in the figure of the Midgard serpent (possibly on side B), Surt (on side D), and Garm (maybe on

[80] An interesting interpretation of the highly complex concept of the Holy Trinity through a network of analogies might be revealed in the association of both Odin, the father, and his sons, Balder and Viðar, with Christ and the Christian God.

side B). The darkening of the sun (swallowed by Fenrir) and the falling of the stars as natural phenomena (cf. Mk 13, 24-25) also connect the different stories, together with the all-destroying fires (associated with Surt). The four identical riders may depict the warriors of the last battle, but their number also coincides (whether intentionally or not) with the four riders of the Apocalypse.

Some of the overlaps between the Norse and the Christian narratives, as recorded in the *Völuspá* and in Snorri, may be due to the influence of Christianity on the eschatological story in Scandinavia, or they have been given their prominent places through the influence of Christianity. However, the presence of some of these motifs on the Gosforth cross, dated centuries earlier then the Norse written sources, indicates the original status and significance of at least the above mentioned episodes. Elements of Christian influence on the pagan eschatological story might be seen in the portents: the decline of morals, hatred between men, brothers fighting their brothers, murder and incest, as well as in the idea of punishment for the wicked and reward for the good (Turville-Petre 1964, 282) and the renewal of the world with an emphasis on nature (cf. Rev 21.1, Isaiah 65.17).

Even though the knowledge of the Latin sources of the Christian eschatology and apocalypse[81] were restricted in Viking-age England to people related to episcopal sees and monasteries, the main ideas may have spread through translations and adaptations into the vernacular, which were used in the education of parish priests (Hultgård 1990, 347) as well as in the everyday practice of parish churches. A special interest in these narratives was inspired by the widespread fear of the end of the world around the year 1000, which may have resulted in the fact that in the Scandinavian settlement area around Gosforth the correspondences between the Scandinavian and Christian eschatological narratives were noted and also recorded in a visual medium.

[81] Matthew 24, 3-44; Mark 13, 5-37; Luke 21, 8-36 (known as the "synoptic apocalypse"); judgement teaching in Matthew 25, Daniel 7-12; Revelation of John; and IV Esdras (or The Second Book of Esdras) in the Latin Vulgate.

By the Viking period at the latest, Odin became the chief god of the Scandinavian pantheon, taking over this position from, and some of the functions of Tiw, the ancient sky god. The strong influence of Christianity makes it difficult to detect the beliefs and practices surrounding the figure of Odin, but his figure seems to have united various facets of pagan Scandinavian culture. He was god of magic, healing, poetry, and war, the lord of the dead and the hanged, as well as of chieftains and warriors. An earlier continental counterpart of the god (known in Old English as *Woden,* in Old Franconian as *Wodan*, in Old High German as *Uuodan*), was certainly known to and venerated among the early Anglo-Saxons, but the records of his cult are relatively sparse in the British Isles as a result of early Christianization. Under the influence of the Viking settlers, who brought along their practices related to the Norse version of the god, Woden's cult might have undergone some changes, as it is indicated by a change in the use of the name of the god. In earlier Old English sources as well as in place names we find *Woden*, while later homilists, notably Ælfric and Wulfstan, rather called him *Oþon.* By using the anglicized but Norse form of the name, they either wished to refer to specifically Danish practices in connection with the god, or the figure of the native god became fused with its Scandinavian counterpart.[82]

Insular evidence

Woden seems to have enjoyed great popularity among the early Anglo-Saxons and to have had a well-established cult that flourished primarily in Wessex, Essex, and Kent, as the evidence of a dozen known place names suggests. The Old English word for Wednesday, *Wodnesdæg*, indicates his association with Mercury in the *interpretatio Romana*, as well as his popularity in Anglo-Saxon England. It is hard to say how the insular pagans saw Woden, but he certainly had some of the major characteristics we know from the Scandinavian sources. He was the god of war, as it is suggested by various representations of (naked) warriors with spears associated with his cult (e.g. a buckle

[82] In his *Chronicon*, Æthelweard uses the older form *Woddan* once, and in all other cases he has the anglicized compromise form *Woden* (Meaney 1966, 110), also when talking about English genealogies. That the connection between Woden and Odin was probably realized by the contemporaries is supported by a scribal addition in the margin of MS Bodley, Hatton 133 of Wulfstan's version of *De falsis diis*, which

from Finglesham, Kent, or the dancing warriors on the Sutton Hoo helmet) as well as by the association of the so-called beasts of battle (raven, wolf, and eagle), a frequent motif of Old English heroic poetry, with Odin's animals. His position as the head of the pantheon and the god of chieftains is supported by the fact that the royal families of Wessex, Kent, East Anglia, Bernicia, and Deira all claimed descent from him. He was also associated with the dead: in place names his name is often combined with the word 'barrow'. In the Old English *Nine Herbs Charm* against poison he appears as a healing magician, which points towards his function as the god of magic. In Ælfric's homily *De falsis diis*, Odin (first identified with Mercury, then also referred to with the "Danish" word *Oþon*) is described as a trickster who is "crafty and deceitful in his deeds" and loves "thievery and deception." The insular Odin was also associated with the discovery of the writing of runes: in the prose fragment of *Salomon and Saturn*, he appears (again associated with Mercury) as the founder of letters (line 58; Kemble 1974 [1848], 193 and 197; cf. also *Adrian and Ritheus*, line 16, ibid. p. 201 and 209), and the *Rune Poem* (as well as its late Icelandic counterpart) also refers to him as the source of all language (stanza IV, line 10; Halsall 1981, 110-11).[83] (Davidson 1969, 225-6; Turville-Petre 1964, 70-72; Meaney 1966; Owen 1981, 8-22; Simek 1993, 374; North 1997, 78-88; Ström and Biezais 1075, 98-103)

Viking-age visual representations

Pictorial representations of Odin are known from Viking-age picture stones from Scandinavia, where he is either accompanied by birds, or more commonly by his eight-legged horse Sleipnir (e.g. on Alskog Tjängvide I (Lindquist. fig. 137) from Gotland). According to Lindquist, the rider on the latter stone might also be a fallen warrior and the eight legs should be explained by having two horses carrying the dead warrior's bier. Since there is no sign of an eight-legged horse associated with Odin in earlier times, it may be a relatively late conception coming in by way of the Baltic (Davidson 1967, 125), which might also explain the absence of the eight-legged horse in Anglo-Saxon England.

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reads "Oþon unde Wodones deg" ('Oþon, whence Wednesday', explaining the origin of the word). (Johnson 1995, 55)

[83] Woden's name also appears, in a dismissive manner, in the Old English *Maxims I* of the Exeter Book, where he is mentioned as the maker of idols, and is contrasted with the Christian God, the maker of heaven, following the interpretation of heathen gods according to Psalm 96:5.

The existence of his cult among the Scandinavian settlers of the British Isles is indicated, among others, by numerous depictions of warriors and horsemen with spears, often accompanied by birds, which were probably associated with the cult of Odin (Davidson 1967, 130), as well as by the skaldic poem *Eiríksmál*, composed in memory of Erik Bloodaxe, which describes Odin welcoming the slain Erik, arriving with five other princes in Valhalla.

The fragmentary slab of Jurby 125 (Kermode 98) from the Isle of Man possibly shows another aspect of Odin's cult: his association with hangmen. It depicts a man with a pole over his shoulder, from which dangles a body. (A similar image is known from Lärbro St. Hammers, Gotland, where a warrior is hanging from a tree, accompanied by an eagle and a flying figure, possibly a valkyrie.) Due to Odin's association with hanging, the figure might be identified as Odin, but we cannot be sure because of the fragmentary nature of the slab (Margeson 1983, 96). The slab displays further two iconographical elements which might be associated with the figure, a woman in a trailing dress and a boar and a hart, but the there is no way to determine the relation of these images.

Pre-Conquest stone monuments from Northern England

Even though several Viking-age carvings display a number of Odin's common attributes, which might prompt an identification of the god or at least that of heroic warriors associated with his cult, none of these carvings can be identified and interpreted with any certainty, and they can just as well show secular depictions using popular iconographical features of the heroic tradition. Nonetheless, it is worth surveying the surviving material briefly, because it reveals elements of a heroic tradition that were closely associated with the figure of Odin, even if we cannot identify the presence of any specific narratives related to the god.

The carvings associated with the figure of Odin can be arranged in three groups. The first one reveals the Anglo-Scandinavians' familiarity with Odin's role at Ragnarök, when he is swallowed by the wolf Fenrir and later avenged by his son Viðar. The only carving which might actually show the figure of Odin is the graffiti slab of *Skipwith* (no. 1, Eastern Yorkshire), which depicts a man swallowed by a giant beast (discussed above). Odin's death at Ragnarök is indirectly implied on the Gosforth cross, even though he does

not appear there: Viðar is avenging his death. The valkyrie below the Crucifixion and the four horsemen with spears are also iconographical elements related to the cult of Odin.

Horsemen and warriors are frequent images on Anglo-Scandinavian sculptures. A number of these warriors are depicted with birds, which recalls an association with Odin himself, but no particular mythological narrative can be related to any of these figures. Even though they probably depict heroic warriors rather than the god himself, these carvings will be surveyed below. The numerous images of riders with spear (e.g. Gainford 4, Sockburn 14, Hart 1, Chester-le-Street 1, or the Gosforth cross) seem to be even more general depictions of heroic warriors, therefore they will not be discussed in detail. Among the carvings testifying the popularity of heroic iconography, Baldersby 1 deserves special attention for possibly displaying the image of a berserk, a masked warrior dedicated to Odin (as it is known from Snorri). The ecstatic fury of the berserks, known in Old Norse as *berserksgangr*, indicates a further facet of the composite character of Odin: his association with magic, shamanism, and ecstasy.

The most interesting carving in the Anglo-Scandinavian cultural context is Kirkbymoorside 3, which possibly depicts Odin's self-sacrifice on Yggdrasil, but at the same time recalls the crossless type of Crucifixion iconography. While the other carvings only bear witness to a pagan iconographical tradition related to the figure or the cult of Odin which was imported by the new settlers from Scandinavia, this latter image indicates a dialogue between the old and the new traditions. After a brief survey of all carvings related to or associated with the figure of Odin, the reassessment of his figure in an Anglo-Scandinavian cultural context will be discussed separately and in greater detail.

Warrior cult

Billingham 1, Co. Durham (NZ 462241), part of cross-shaft [first half of 10th c.]

The carving on the now almost unintelligible cross shaft fragment, built into the church tower, can only be reconstructed with the help of a drawing from 1867 [fig. 54]. It depicts a standing human figure pierced through his waist by a bar terminating in interlace. He is holding two birds on his wrists. The interpretation of the carving is uncertain, but an association with Odin might be suggested on the basis of the two birds, possibly ravens, depicted in a similar way on Kirklevington 2, and the piercing bar which might represent a spear.

Kirklevington 2, North Riding (NZ 432098), upper part of cross shaft [first half of 10th c.]

The now middle panel of side A (broad) of the upper part of a shaft fragment shows an Anglo-Scandinavian-style frontal human figure with a pointed hat or helmet [fig. 55]. He is wearing a flared smock to knee level, and two birds with short legs are sitting on his shoulders. The iconography of the carving is again uncertain, but similarly to Billingham 1, an association with Odin or his cult might be proposed on the basis of the two birds, possibly ravens. According to Bailey (1981, 93), the carving might represent Odin with his ravens or a warrior saint inspired by Divine Wisdom. Collingwood (1927, 163) interpreted the birds as doves and the man as the deceased.

Sherburn 1, East Riding (SE 959775), part of cross shaft [10th to 11th c.]

The only visible side of the cross shaft fragment [fig. 56], now built into the south wall of the chancel, shows two crudely cut standing figures, with the feet of one on the head of the other. The upper one is wearing an ankle-length robe with V-neck. His right arm is bent upwards and is touching a bird on his right shoulder. Of the second figure only his head and upper body are visible. There is a row of rough pellets on his forehead, possibly indicating hair. The image is rather unusual, and the interpretation of the two figures is uncertain. The one with bird on his shoulder might indicate Odin, but it could also be a secular figure.

Sockburn 3, Co. Durham (NZ 349070), part of cross-shaft [first half of 10th c.]

In the upper part of side A (broad) of the cross shaft fragment from Sockburn [fig. 57] there is a large knotted serpent below which a horseman is depicted in profile facing left, holding a large bird of prey on his extended left arm. In the fragmentary lower scene, separated from above by a horizontal twist, two figures are seen facing each other. The one on the left is a woman in a cloak or overgarment, holding a drinking horn to the lips of the other figure, probably a man, who is drinking from the horn. Much of the second figure is broken away. Between the two figures there is a round shield with a boss. The rather worn upper part of side C shows two warriors in short tunics and with shields, either facing each other or marching in procession.

The rider on face A is different from other Anglo-Scandinavian depictions of horsemen, but the presence of the serpent and the bird, both common attributes of Odin, suggests that it could be a depiction of the god himself or heroic warrior dedicated to him. The horseman is probably linked with the image below, depicting the welcoming of a warrior in Valhalla by a valkyrie (cf. also Klinte Hunninge, Gotland) (Lang 1972, 240).

Baldersby 1, North Riding (SE ca. 3578), shaft fragment [first half of 10th c.]

Two sides of the Baldersby cross shaft fragment display images that can be associated with the warrior cult. Side A [fig. 58] shows a profile horseman with a spear facing left, an image often found on Anglo-Scandinavian carvings. The image on side C [fig. 59], depicting two standing figures, is more unusual. The profile figure on the left is wearing a long robe with broad sleeves and a pointed hat or hood. He is facing right, and his face is canine or bear-like. The figure on the right, facing left, has a knee-length kirtle and he is carrying a broad object, probably a sword, over his shoulder, while touching the other figure with his right arm. The hooded figure's cloak is similar to that on Kirklevington 2, while his face is paralleled on Kirklevington 4. According to Lang (2001, 58), it might represent a berserk spirit, referring to the masked warriors known to be dedicated to Odin.

Kirklevington 4, North Riding (NZ 432098), shaft fragment [first half of 10th c.]

Two figures of animal heads appear in the lower panel of a shaft fragment at Kirklevington. The two figures are facing each other and touching a long object or stick standing between them. In the broken panel above only two feet are visible. The sculpture also displays a ring knot motif. Since the other Kirklevington fragment might depict Odin himself or a warrior associated with him, an interpretation of the two figures as berserks would not be out of context here.

Lancaster, Lancashire (ca. SD 475615), cross shaft fragment [ca. 10th c.]

The Lancaster cross shaft fragment displays two figures with beasts' heads and in long robes, flanking a decorative cross. There are looking slightly upwards to the cross and their tongues are clearly visible (cf. Collingwood 1927, fig. 128). The combination of the beast-headed figures with a cross is unusual. They are taking the place of the sponge-

bearer and the lance-bearer, thus an association of the two figures with soldiers seems intended. If the two beast-headed figures are indeed intended to represent masked berserks, the followers of Odin, the scene recalls the interpretation of the crucified Christ as a heroic warrior who is to be received in Valhalla (cf. also *The Dream of the Rood*, or the Gosforth cross).

Odin's self-sacrifice

Kirkbymoorside 3, North Riding (SE 697866), cross shaft fragment [10th c.]

It is side A of a small cross shaft fragment [fig. 60] which carries an iconography that might be related to Odin. It shows a crudely cut standing human figure with his arms extended to the frames and his feet turned to the right. He is wearing a long gown and has a strange row of pellets along his chin. Behind the head are obscure horizontal lines. Side C displays an S-shaped ribbon beast. Lang (Lang 1991, 156) argues for a secular portrait on side A, backed by a dragon. The pellets in this case might depict a curly beard. Bailey (1980, 134) on the other hand suggests an interpretation of the unusual pellets as a collar or noose, and the figure as the hanged Odin at his self-sacrifice on Yggdrasil, as it is reported in the *Hávamál*. The bodily posture of the figure recalls the crossless type of Crucifixion iconography, known for example from the Gosforth cross, and the standing clothed Christ in the Irish tradition on Brompton 14 A (Northern Yorkshire), which might suggests a link between Odin's sacrifice and Christ on the cross.

Discussion: The mingling of old and new traditions

Even though the interpretation of the carvings is often uncertain, Viking-age sculptural evidence suggests a number of different functions associated with the figure of Odin. The most widespread and also most general one is his association with the warrior cult, represented by numerous images of horsemen and warriors with spears and birds (and possibly of his berserks). Representations of the Ragnarök events and Odin's self-sacrifice on Yggdrasil indicate the circulation of at least two key mythological narratives related to the god. The iconographical context and visual realization of these scenes suggest that in the Anglo-Scandinavian communities some connections were established between Odin's figure, his warrior cult, and the Christian lore. According to the testimony of *The Dream of the Rood* and the Gosforth cross, Christ was accepted among the heroic

warriors and welcomed in Valhalla among the *einherjar*. Points of resemblance were also seen between the figures of Christ and Odin himself on various levels. The most obvious link is their role as "chief gods," and Odin's designation as "Allfather" might actually reflect Christian influence.[84]

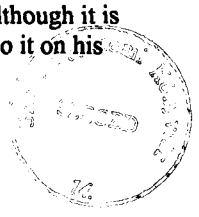
The other major parallel between the roles of Odin and Christ was seen in their self-sacrifices on Yggdrasil and the cross respectively, as it has often been pointed out in scholarly literature. Odin's self-sacrifice is recorded in *Hávamál* 138-141, where he is described acquiring the knowledge of the runes by offering himself to himself by hanging on Yggdrasil, wounded with a spear. Hanging and dedication by spear were therefore rites associated with Odin (cf. Davidson 1954, 51). References to the practice of hanging are found in Old English literature in *The Fortunes of Men* (ll. 10-14 and 33-42) and in *Beowulf* (ll. 2444-62), however, there is no reliable evidence for human sacrifices to Odin from the Anglo-Saxon period (Owen 1981, 15-20).

It has been suggested that the image of the god sacrificing himself by hanging on a tree was developed under the influence of Christianity and was only an adaptation on the Christian story. Although the significance of the story and some of its details might have changed slightly due to contacts with Christianity, the story of the self-sacrificing god was deeply rooted in the heathen thought, and its origin lies in shamanistic rituals, namely in the initiation rite to acquire new knowledge (Davidson 1964, 144; Simek 1993, 249). The similarities between the Christian and the pagan stories are however striking. Both gods are sacrificed on the Tree of Life or the World Tree (cf. next chapter), both are "stuck with a spear," which causes their deaths, and both sacrifices are self-sacrifices, with Odin giving "himself to himself," and Christ the Son sacrificed by and for the Father with whom he is one in the Holy Trinity. Christ's death on the cross is however not only a self-sacrifice, but also forceful death as a result of treason. Christ's association also with other mythological characters shows that both aspects found analogies: the parallel with Odin on Yggdrasil emphasizes the self-sacrificial nature of the Crucifixion, while seeing Christ as a warrior dedicated by spear and hanging and received in Valhalla, and the association with Balder's death indicate his role as a victim. Odin's and Christ's ritual deaths show one more important parallel: neither of the two gods suffer real death, but

[84] The unique approach to the highly complex concept of the Holy Trinity through a network of analogies might be revealed in the association of both Odin, the father, as well as his sons, Balder and Viðar, with Christ.

they move between the realms of the living and the dead.[85] Odin's hanging on Yggdrasil pierced by a spear is a ritual death and voluntary sacrifice for the acquisition of the hidden knowledge of the runes, which qualifies him as a culture hero, but it clearly differs in nature from the death of Christ, because he is not sharing the suffering of the world or saving mankind by his sacrificial death.

[85] Besides this shamanistic act of death and rebirth, Odin is also known as *psychopompos* (i.e. guide of souls to the otherworld) from the *Völsunga Saga* and *Egils Saga Ásmundar* (Davidson 1964, 143). Although it is the valkyries who are generally known to guide the dead warriors to the otherworld, they also do it on his command.



YGGDRASIL, THE COSMIC TREE

Trees had played an important role in the culture of the Germanic peoples from early on,[86] and the concept of the cosmic tree or tree of life is a key element of several mythologies and cosmologies all over the world. It is therefore not surprising that Christ's sacrificial cross has also been associated with the Tree of Life, and that a parallel between that and Yggdrasil, the cosmic tree of Norse mythology, has long been noted.

The Eddic sources (*Völuspá* 19, 47 and *Grímnismál* 35, 44) identify the mythical Yggdrasil as an ash tree. It receives the properties of a world-tree in Snorri's detailed depiction in *Gylfaginning* 14, according to which it is the biggest and best tree of all trees which rises up to the sky and its branches are spread over the whole world. It forms the center of the world, upon which the welfare of the universe depends, and it is holding the universe as a main pillar (axis mundi). The name of the tree, 'Odin's horse', probably refers to Odin's self-sacrifice by hanging himself on Yggdrasil (see above). (Gallows were understood as the horses of the hanged. Cf. the phrase "ride on the gallows" in *Beowulf* ll. 2445-46, meaning 'being hanged'.)

Yggdrasil has three roots: one reaching to Hel, the world of dead, the other to the world of the frost-giants, and the third to the world of men. According to Snorri, there are three wells at its base, one under each root: *Mímisbrunnr* 'the well of Mímir', *Hvergelmir* 'roaring kettle'(?), and *Urðarbrunnr*, or Urd's well, 'the well of fate'. The *Völuspá* (19) only mentions Urd's well, which might reflect an earlier tradition. The cosmic tree is inhabited by various animals: the squirrel Ratatosk runs up and down the trunk, an eagle sits in its branches, four stags are eating its leaves, and Níðhögg the serpent-dragon, together with several snakes, is gnawing at its roots. Yggdrasil is not eternal, its trunk is rotting gradually, which is a sign of general decay. Before Ragnarök the gods will sit in council beneath it, and Yggdrasil will quiver as a sign of the coming of the end of the

[86] Various reports about Charlemagne's campaign to the Saxons in 772 refer to the cult of the sacred tree Irminsul among the continental Germanic peoples. It was a huge tree trunk erected in open air, probably a cultic pole of the type of world-pillars, which was used as a place of worship. A less probable interpretation is suggested in Widukind of Corvey's *Res gestae Saxonicae*, according to which it was a sign of victory. (Simek 1993, 175-76) There is evidence for a similar ancient cultic pillar, which had been erected at Yeavering, and later more recent ones were added to it. (Pointed out by Gale Owen-Crocker in private correspondence.) In heroic literature trees are also frequently associated with noble warriors and weapons and are often mentioned in kennings both in eddic and in Old English poetry.

world, and then fall, but will be restored in the new world (*Völuspá* 47) (Turville-Petre 1964, 279; Simek 1993, 375-76).

Only few visual representations of Yggdrasil are known from medieval Scandinavia, and they all represent it as an inhabited tree, in accordance with Snorri. The reliefs on the interior wall of the stave church at Sogne, Norway, depict the tree with the stags and Níðhögg (Simek 1993, 376), while later Icelandic manuscript illuminations also show the other animals.

Pre-Conquest stone monuments from Northern England

Even though our sources on Yggdrasil are much later than the tenth century, the concept of the cosmic tree was certainly known among the Anglo-Scandinavians, even if possibly in a slightly different form than we know it from the Scandinavian sources. There is only one insular stone monument from the Viking period that can be related to Yggdrasil, but it is an especially valuable one, because it seems to provide evidence for the adaptation of the Germanic world tree in a Christian context.

Dearham 1, Cumbria (NY 072365), cross [10th c.]

Side A (broad) of the shaft of the circle-headed cross of Dearham [fig. 61] is decorated with multiple ring-chain of Borre-style origin which merges into a bulb-like object at the base of the shaft. The plant-like bulb has two branches terminating in leaves, and there seem to be two birds flanking the bulb. The other sides are all decorated with plait or interlace. The unusual bulb-like object was interpreted in the nineteenth century by W. S. Calverly as Yggdrasil, which was motivated by the setting of the stone at that time with the bulb half-buried in the ground (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 94). The representation is unusual in the sense that the threefold root of the cosmic tree, often emphasized in the surviving literary sources, is missing, which might be due to an earlier or different regional tradition. The image of a living tree on a cross invites an interpretation of the cross as cosmic tree or the Tree of Life, an interpretation well known in Christianity, which however does not exclude a pagan parallel.

Discussion: Yggdrasil and/on the Cross

The ancient oriental concept of the cosmic tree had a strong impact on the Christian representation and symbolism of trees. Trees in Christian art and literature are symbols of divine or human life, both temporal and eternal, but they can also symbolize transience and death. In the Old Testament trees are often places of divine presence or appearance, or they symbolize powerful rulers or the righteous.

The biblical Tree of Life has acquired especially rich symbolism, and various legends became attached to it throughout the centuries. Scriptural sources (Gen. 2.9 and 3.22-24; Rev. 2.7 and 22.2, 14, 19) explain the Tree of Life as the symbol of Paradise and the end of time, or the symbol of wisdom (Proverbs 3,18). Representations of the cross of Christ as the Tree of Life are known from as early as the fifth century and onwards, and they were based on various legends and speculations that enjoyed great popularity throughout Middle Ages. According to typological interpretation, first formulated by Justin, the Tree of Life in Paradise, situated in the middle of the earth, represents a type of Christ's cross, which is the true Tree of Life. The cross was also interpreted as related to the Tree of Life in a more "physical" way, namely as the son of the Tree of Life, which grew from a seed of the paradisiacal tree (Kirschbaum 1968, vol. 1, 259-67; vol. 2, 260). According to another medieval legend, the cross was made directly of the wood of the paradisiacal Tree of Life (or the Tree of Knowledge), which again suggests a direct physical connection between the two. The association of vine and vinescrolls with the Tree of Life was based on the widespread belief that both the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge were actually vines bearing the fruit of eternal life. In the early medieval understanding of the cross as fruit-bearing tree or vine, Christ was interpreted as its fruit, and his blood shed at the crucifixion as the wine made of this fruit. The eucharistic significance of the scene needs no further explanation.

Earlier crosses of Anglian origin or influence were often decorated with vinescrolls that were derived from the Constantinian vine of Mediterranean art, referring to the Gospel texts "I am the true vine" (John 15.1) and "I am the vine and ye are the branches" (John 15.5). Thus the vinescroll patterns on Anglian crosses, often populated with animals or even human figures, were not purely decorative designs, but symbolised Christ and the true believers. At the same time they also added an ornament of life to the crosses, recalling the rich symbolism of the Tree of Life. In insular manuscript

illuminations Christ's cross was sometimes depicted as a tree trunk with branches or even with leaves, emphasizing its interpretation as the Tree of Life. Similarly, on a cross shaft at Kirkby Wharfe, Northern Yorkshire, two standing figures are flanking an empty cross which has trefoil leaves on the arms (Bailey 1980, 147). The Old English poem *The Dream of the Rood*, as well as its earlier and shorter version in runic script on the Ruthwell cross, indicate not only the wide-spread cult and veneration of the cross among the Anglo-Saxons (together with several other pieces of evidence), but also a view of the cross as a living creature (a speaking object in both texts), which is more than the instrument of death and torture.

The widespread association of Christ's cross with the Tree of Life invited obvious parallels with the Norse counterpart, Yggdrasil, or its insular equivalent. On the one hand, both constituted the center of the universe: Yggdrasil in a more physical way, while the cross primarily (but not exclusively, according to medieval legend) in an abstract sense through its central nature in the Christian doctrine. A further parallel between Yggdrasil and the cross was provided by their roles in the self-sacrifices of Odin and Christ respectively (see above), as well as by being sacred poles along which the movement between the worlds of the living and the dead was possible.

It is easy to get carried away by the beauty of these parallels, but in reality it is hard to determine whether a connection between Yggdrasil and the cross was ever made among the Anglo-Scandinavians. However, it seem certain that the Anglo-Saxons have looked upon Christ's cross as something more than an instrument of death, something that carries the signs of life and is closer to a living tree than to a man-made object. In the Anglo-Scandinavian communities aspects of the two trees, Yggdrasil and the cross, might have been mingled alongside the parallels noted above, and the concept of the cross as the Tree of Life have been strengthened.[87]

[87] The image of Christ's cross as a great cosmic cross uniting heaven and earth appears in the opening vision in *The Dream of the Rood.*

FEMALE FIGURES: THE VALKYRIES

The last group of sculptures to be discussed are those with images of female figures. Of course, female figures feature relatively frequently on stone carvings, and many of them appear in a secular context as companions of men. In a few cases however the iconographical context can help us identify them as valkyries, well known figures of Germanic mythology and folklore. These are the cases we wish to focus on now, ignoring a number of other carvings with secular or uncertain iconography of female figures. Forcing a division of secular versus mythological on the monuments discussed, some of these carvings would probably fall into the category of secular commemorative stones, but the identifiable mythological origin of these female figures makes it worth examining them in the present discussion.

Sources and analogues

In the early tradition, valkyries (Old Norse pl. *valkyrjar* 'choosers of the slain') were fierce female spirits or demons of death and battle who determined the course of battle, escorted the dead to the otherworld, and acted as protectors of young warriors. The change in the concept of Valhalla from a battlefield to a warrior's paradise also marked a shift in the conception of the valkyries (Simek 1993, 347 and 349). The earlier conception of fierce female spirits attending the war god (and of a male figure guiding the spear in battle) seems to have been replaced by a different picture, which came to Scandinavia possibly from the East (Davidson 1967, 130). Valkyries became supernatural female warriors who, following the wish of Odin, interfered in the course of battle, determined the fate of warriors, and led the fallen heroes to Valhalla. There they welcomed them with a horn or cup of mead[88] and served all *einherjar* with food and drink (cf. *Gylfaginning*; *Grímnismál* 36). With this shift valkyries lost much of their original demonic character, acquired human traits, and became popular characters of heroic literature and court poetry.

The original two-fold nature of the valkyries was reflected in their association with burial mounds and the different literary and folklore traditions concerning their forms of existence. They did not always appear as beautiful women clad in armor; the

original dark aspect of their nature found its expression in a gigantic stature (cf. the tradition of demonic female guardian figures reflected in Grendel's mother) or in a half-human, half-animal form (cf. possibly depicted on the Franks Casket) (Davidson 1969, 220).

Valkyries were also frequently associated with birds, especially with swans and ravens. They seem to be related to swan-maidens known from a variety of religious traditions (cf. *Völundarkviða*), and their association with death might have resulted in the Scandinavian folk belief that the sight of a swan in flight was an omen of death (Hastings 1908, cited in McGuire and Clark 1987, 40). Birds were generally associated with divination and were looked upon as the bringers of news (cf. for example Odin's two ravens, Hugin and Munin, or the birds in the Sigurd story that inform the hero about Regin's plan). In the Old English poem *Exodus* (line 164) a raven over the Egyptian army is referred to as the "dark one choosing the slain" (*wonn wælceaseg*), an expression which is cognate with Old Norse *valkyrja*. Similarly to valkyries, the raven also appears in close association with Odin.

In their duties the valkyries overlap with other mythological female beings, such as the Norns, who determined fate, the *völvas*, or sorceresses or seers, who had the power to acquire knowledge of secrets and of the future by intercourse with the dead, and the *fylgjur*, who were attendants of individuals as their "exterior souls" or guardian spirits, and usually took the shape of female figures (McGuire and Clark 1987, 40; Simek 1993, 96-97). Several of the eddic sources suggest that the *dísir* were also valkyrie-like guardians of the death (cf. *Atlamál* 28), and in *Guðrúnarkviða I*, 19 valkyries are even called "Odin's dísir."[89]

Visual sources from Scandinavia

The motif of a valkyrie welcoming a dead warrior in Valhalla is a common image on Viking-age picture stones from Gotland: Halla Broa IV (Lindquist, fig. 116), Nar Bosarve (Lindquist, fig. 175), and Stenkyrka Lillbjars (Lindquist, fig. 112) all show a horn extended by a woman towards a warrior on horseback in welcome. Alskog

[88] Similarly to the Celtic tradition, the cup or horn in this situation signified the drink giving freedom from time and mortality. (Davidson 1969, 222)

[89] The actual role of the dísir can only be defined with difficulty: the word seems to refer both to the souls of dead women and to women in general, but it can also denote a kind of goddess (maybe a fertility deity). (Simek 1993, 61; Lindow 2001, 95)

Tjängvide I (Lindquist, fig. 137) shows more details: here the woman's long hair is braided and tied back in a knot, and her trailing dress is partly covered by a shawl or short cloak. She is greeting a rider on an eight-legged horse, probably Odin himself. Another two picture stones from Lärbro St. Hammars also show a horn-bearing woman greeting a horseman. The female figure is also known from small silver and bronze figurines and amulets from Viking-age Scandinavia, often found in graves (e.g. from Birka and Klinta, Sweden). The image of the horn-bearing woman might have been imported to the British Isles on such portable metal objects as well as on wood carvings and tapestries.

Insular evidence

According to insular evidence, valkyries were well known in Anglo-Saxon England even before the Viking invasion. The Old English word *wælcyrge* (or *wælcyrie*), cognate with Old Norse *valkyrja*, is known from the eighth century onwards and found in word lists. In Glossary I in Cotton Cleopatra A.iii and in the older *Corpus Glossary* it glosses the names of classical furies (North 1997, 105-6). Poetic sources allude to a valkyrie tradition native to Anglo-Saxon England: the Old English *Charm for a Sudden Stitch* (against elfshot) describes supernatural female spirits riding over a barrow, yelling and sending spears, while in the *Charm for Sudden Swarm*, flying bees are described as "victory-women" (*sigewif*).[90] But valkyries were not necessarily always understood as mythological or supernatural figures. In Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* from the early eleventh century the word refers to human sorceresses or seers (probably related to the concept of the völvas, cf. above) who are listed among those who are most stained with sin. In a Christian context they were probably only "the chooser of the slain," as the name itself suggests, which recalls their association with divination and death, as well as the reference in *Exodus* 164 to a raven as the "dark one choosing the slain" (see above). The tenth-century skaldic poem *Eiríksmál*, composed on the death of Erik Bloodaxe, describes Valhalla as inhabited with einherjar and valkyries. The same conception of valkyries

[90] The first charm (*For a Sudden Stich*) is recorded on fols. 175a-176a in MS Harley 585 (London, British Library; dated to the turn of the tenth and eleventh centuries), while the second one (*For a Sudden Swarm*, or also called *For a Swarm of Bees*) is in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 41, p.182 (dated to the early eleventh century). In spite of the relative late date of the manuscripts, both texts reflect an earlier pagan "medical" lore preserved over the centuries.

seems to be represented in Viking-age stone carvings as well, where the female figures appear in association with Odin and his warrior cult.[91]

Pre-Conquest stone carvings

There are three carvings from Viking-age northern England that display representations of valkyries with some certainty. Two of them come from the same location, Sockburn in Co. Durham, and the third one is the famous Gosforth cross. The female figure in the "Weland in the flying contrivance" iconographical pattern (discussed above in ch. 3.3.1 under Group I) has also been identified as a valkyrie. Even though this interpretation seems less probable, it cannot be dismissed as impossible, thus it will be discussed in some detail below.

Sockburn 3, Co. Durham (NZ 349070), part of cross shaft and neck [first half of 10th c.]

Face A (broad) of the cross shaft fragment of Sockburn [fig. 57] is divided into two panels. In the broken lower panel two figures are facing each other. The one on the right is much damaged, only his arm and head are visible. There is a round shield between the two figures which probably belongs to him. The other semi-frontal figure is wearing a flowing cloak held by a brooch, and is holding a drinking horn from which the other figure is drinking. The scene probably depicts a valkyrie welcoming a warrior in Valhalla. In the upper panel there is a horseman facing right, riding beneath a knotted serpent. On his left hand he is holding a bird. The picture might depict Odin and his raven, or simply a warrior of noble origin. James Lang (1972, 244-45) suggested that the two panels were probably meant to depict one scene, similarly to carvings known from Gotland picture stones (e.g. Klinte Hunninge), and it was the shape of the shaft that forced limitations on the sculptor, who divided the scene and depicted the warrior twice.

Side C shows another two warriors with round shields, either facing each other or walking in procession. The monument is probably a secular one, commemorating a warrior possibly associated with the cult of Odin, as it is indicated by the presence of the

[91] There are several representation of female figures on stone monuments from the Isle of Man too (e.g. Kirk Michael 123, Jurby 127 (99), Jurby 125 (98)). These are depicted in the Scandinavian manner, with long hair and trailing dresses, however, no certain identification of any of them as valkyries can be given due to the lack of context.

bird, the serpent, and the valkyrie in the carving, all common attributes of the warrior god, but not necessarily depicting any particular mythological episode.

Sockburn 15, Co. Durham (NZ 349070), fragment of lower part of a hogback [first half of 10th c.]

On side A (long) of this second Sockburn carving [fig. 62], there is a standing, profile female figure, with her gown trailing to a point behind her. She is extending her hands, and judging by Scandinavian parallels, she is probably holding a horn before her. Behind the woman there is a proudly standing bird. The recipient of the horn is lost, but the scene clearly resembles that of valkyries receiving the warriors in Valhalla (cf. Sockburn 3).

Gosforth 1, Cumbria (NY 073036), cross [first half of 10th c.]

The iconographical program of the Gosforth cross has already been discussed in detail above (cf. ch. 3.3.4 on Ragnarök), but the unusual iconography of the small female figure on side C (east) should again be recalled in the present context. She is part of the framed and crossless Crucifixion scene [fig. 34], and accompanies Longinus, the lance bearer. She has a trailing dress and knotted pigtail, and she is holding a horn-like object in her hand. The uniqueness of the representation lies in the fact that traditionally we would expect Stephaton, the sponge bearer, to accompany Longinus, or else, in a three-figure Crucifixion scene the female figure should be the Virgin Mary (on our left), accompanying St. John (on our right, and not the other way round, as it is on this cross).

The iconographical features of the female figure on the Gosforth cross (trailing dress, knotted hair, horn in her hands) clearly suggest an identification as a valkyrie receiving a dead warrior in Valhalla. As we have pointed out above, in the light of her traditional role in Germanic mythology, the presence of a valkyrie in the Crucifixion image may suggest (a) a connection between the Germanic and Christian places of afterlife, i.e. Valhalla and Heaven, (b) a parallel between Odin and Christ as lords of these places, and (c) an interpretation of Christ as a triumphant warrior hero received at Valhalla.[92]

[92] The same idea might be suggested at the end of *The Dream of the Rood* where the heavenly banquet is depicted, recalling the feast of the warriors in Valhalla. The image of the feast is however dependent on our

Depictions of Weland in the flying contrivance from Yorkshire

As it has been suggested above (ch. 3.3.1), the surviving carvings representing (or associated with) the story of Weland the smith can be divided into two groups. The first group contains five carvings from Yorkshire which seem to go back to the same iconographical pattern depicting Weland bound in his flying contrivance, while the second group contains carvings of more uncertain interpretation, all representing winged figures. The monuments of Group I (the cross shaft in Leeds Parish Church, the one in Leeds City Museum, the cross shaft fragments of Sherburn 2 and Sherburn 3, and the hogback fragment of Bedale 6) have already been described and discussed in detail above, and the figure bound in the winged device by bars and loops has been identified on the basis of Scandinavian comparative material as Weland in his flying contrivance escaping after his revenge.

It is the identity of the female figure held by Weland above his head that concerns us (again) in the present context. Due to the fragmentary nature of the carvings in Group I, the woman is only visible on the cross shaft in the *Parish Church of Leeds* (West Riding; dated to the 10th c.) and the cross shaft fragment of *Sherburn 3* (East Riding; dated to the late 9th to late 10th c.). On the Leeds cross the female figure is gripped by Weland by her hair and trailing dress. The Sherburn representation is slightly different. It shows a frontal human face surrounded by an arch which terminates in a bird's head on the top. The horizontal female figure is held by the upward looking bird in its beak that is gripping her by her waist, while the train of her dress and her pigtail with a knot are gripped by the human figure reaching upwards. In spite of the differences, the two representations depict the same scene, thus the identity of the female figure is most probably same in both cases. (The Leeds cross has received much more scholarly attention, and the interpretations suggested below appeared in discussions of that monument.)

According to the surviving literary sources, there are two women in the Weland story that could be identified with the female figure: Weland's swan-maiden wife Alvítr, or Beadohild, the raped princess and future mother of Weland's son. W.G. Collingwood (1927,163) and R. Bailey (1980, 106) suggested an interpretation of the figure as Beadohild, and argued for a combined representation of the rape and escape. Discussing

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accepting the reading of the manuscript word *symle* 'continually' as *symbol* 'feast, banquet', as it is usually

the Leeds carving, Bishop G.F. Browne identified her as Weland's swan-maiden wife Alvítr, being carried off from the lakeshore (1885, 139). Due to the close connection between swan-maidens and valkyries, Alvítr has often been interpreted as a valkyrie (cf. Hauck 1977, 14-16) who returned to help Weland at his escape. Since the surviving insular sources suggest a more "rationalized" escape of Weland and a prominent role of Beadohild in the story (cf. Franks Casket, *Deor*), highlighting her role also in this iconic visual representation seems more convincing than the valkyrie theory.[93]

Other representations of female figures

There are a few other stones depicting female figures, other than valkyries, which can probably by associated with Germanic mythology or history, and are paralleled in their iconography by carvings from Gotland. These are the large hogback from *Lowther (no. 4)*, in Westmorland, Cumbria, and a smaller hogback fragment from *Lowther (no. 5)*, both dated to the tenth century. The former one shows six demi-figures with long curled hair and an arm bent across the body on side C (long, north) [fig. 63], and two manned warrior ships on sea separated by a female(?) demi-figure on side A (long, south) [fig. 64]. Parallels for side A from Stenkyrka Smiss and Lärbro St. Hammars in Gotland suggest a mythological or heroic origin for the scene, but the exact meaning is unknown. Ships also appear on Lärbo Tängelgårda I, Ardre VIII, etc., but the accompanying figure is often a horseman met by a female figure, indicating the reception of a hero in Valhalla. The figural scenes on both sides are accompanied by coiling serpents, which might refer to the world serpent, but could also be a decorative motive representing local fashion.

Side A (long) of Lowther 5 [fig. 65] shows four female demi-figures with an arm folded in front of the body, almost identical with the ones on side C of Lowther 4. The figure on the extreme right might be holding a ring. Below the figures there is serpent. Side C (long) [fig. 66] has almost the exact same pattern of four demi-figures and a serpent. The two Lowther hogbacks obviously represent the same iconographical and narrative tradition, the significance of which is lost for us.

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suggested in the editions. (Noted by Gale Owen-Crocker in private correspondence.)

[93] The least convincing suggestion was made by McGuire and Clark identifying the woman as a valkyrie "escorting the hero into heaven" (1987, 41).

Discussion

Valkyries were certainly not the only female figures of mythological or supernatural origin that were known in Anglo-Saxon England, but they surely belonged to the most popular as well as most versatile female characters. According to the testimony of ecclesiastical sources, the southern areas seem to have developed a more general and secularized understanding of valkyries by the late Anglo-Saxon period, which had been based on the earlier native tradition which imagined them as fierce battle spirits and guardians of the dead. In the Anglo-Scandinavian areas of the north Viking-age sculpture reflects Scandinavian influence both on the conception as well as on the visual representation of valkyries. They appear to have been part of the heroic aristocratic cult and feature on secular funerary monuments or memorial stones.[94] They were probably associated with Odin and serve as an indication of his cult in the north. In association with the heroic cult, valkyries probably lost much of their original demonic features and became attendants of heroes. It is in this function that a valkyrie appears also on the Gosforth cross where she is welcoming Christ the victorious but fallen warrior in the otherworld. In James Lang's reading (1972, 247), it would also allow for the valkyrie to act as a Resurrection symbol receiving Christ in the afterlife. The association of valkyries with Odin also supports an association of Christ with Odin, the possibility of which has already been discussed above.

[94] According to sculptural evidence, Sockburn was the burial place of secular aristocracy in the tenth century. The two Lowther hogbacks with female figures of secular or mythological origin are further examples of secular funerary monuments with female figures.

The carvings as historical and cultural documents

Having discussed the corpus of Viking-age stone carvings with elements of pagan iconography from an iconographer's point of view, it is time to proceed into the field of iconology and examine these monuments as cultural-historical documents in their historical, social, and intellectual context. As we have pointed out above, the special significance of these carvings lies in the fact that they bear witness to the meeting of two cultures, the insular Christian culture of the Anglo-Saxons and the traditional Germanic (Norse) culture of the settling Scandinavians. They provide evidence of the intellectual and social process that took place in the Anglo-Scandinavian communities, which ultimately resulted in the religious conversion and social integration of the new settlers.

There are a number of possible approaches that can be taken to examine the carvings as cultural-historical documents. These range from the archaeological and art historical perspective, focusing on the reasons for stylistic changes and the development of carving techniques, to the social historian's interest in the role of the patrons and artists and the function of the monuments as manifestations of social status. In the present study we will approach the carvings with pagan iconography as documents of an intellectual process that is usually labeled in scholarly literature as the "conversion of the Scandinavian settlers," the historical and political framework of which has already been laid out above.

Conversion, as well as any form of cultural change or assimilation, always takes places on two levels. On the one hand, it is a political and social phenomenon that can be attested in historical sources, and on the other, it is an intellectual change on the level of the individuals involved. In the following chapter we will define the terminology of conversion as an intellectual process in general and discuss the specifics of the situation in Northern England in the Viking period. Chapter 5 will address the characteristics of the religious accommodation process from the perspective of the individual on the basis of the visual evidence provided by the carvings, and examine the way of thinking that enabled members of the Anglo-Scandinavian communities to cope with seemingly opposing world-views and intellectual traditions.

4. The Process of Religious Accommodation in the Anglo-Scandinavian Communities

According to Clifford Geertz (1993a [1973]), religion is a meaning-making enterprise, the social construction and maintenance of a system of understandings and symbols that imposes order on the chaos of the universe.[95] Religion creates a system of meaning, which enables the individual to view the world with a sense of coherence. At the meeting of different religions and cultures, this coherence becomes questioned, and the need arises to alter the existing system of meaning. Religion as meaning-making enterprise operates on two levels: on the one hand it is a social construction, and on the other, a personal experience. These two aspects will be the guidelines for the following two chapters.

Forms of religious encounter

Since culture plays an active role in human reasoning and actions, all religious ideas are culturally embedded, even though theological truths are (or are claimed to be) transcultural (Moreau 2000a, 34). The world-view of a community provides a framework of thinking and communication, and the media of expressing ideas are defined by the specific cultural context of the community. At the meeting of two different cultural traditions (or religions) the different cultural codes have to be matched in order to form one coherent system of meaning. If we take a semiotic approach to culture and interpret it as a system of signs (or rather as a combination of different sign systems), we can approach and interpret cultural changes through changes in one of these sign systems, in this case the visual representation of religious ideas. (Cf. for example, the alteration of the standard Crucifixion iconography on the Gosforth cross.)

Visual representations have a tendency toward relative stability. Well-established iconographical patterns do not easily "go out of fashion," rather they gain a new layer of meaning and become reinterpreted in the new cultural context. Thus they provide a sense of continuity in times of cultural change.[96] This need of continuity makes total

[95] Although Geertz's definition has been challenged by later anthropologists, his recognition of religion as social construction and institution is generally recognized, and it is vital for the present study.

[96] The history of early Christian art and symbols is full of examples of the 'recycling of visual forms' originating in other cultures. A large number of popular Christian iconographical representations go back to

"imposition," that is the entire displacement of the recipient culture, impossible, and results in various degrees if integration (at least in the initial phase) when two religions meet.

The encounter of two religions is never the same, every situation is different and unique. Various terms have been created to describe religious encounters, but many of them lack clear definitions. Most of them emerged from missionary theology and practice, and therefore presuppose a conscious and intentional conversion process under the intervention of Christian missionaries. As we have seen in the historical part above, the conversion of the Scandinavian settlers was not a missionary situation in the traditional sense. Apart from the small-scale "missionary activity" or basic spiritual care ministered by monasteries and parish churches in their own vicinities, the Church showed little active involvement in the conversion process.[97] From the perspective of the recipient community, however, the process and result of the encounter is comparable to missionary conversions.

In cultural studies and anthropology, cultural change resulting from cultural contact is referred to as *acculturation*. The process of acculturation is characterized by high dynamics and has three phases: 1. establishing contact, 2. conflict and crisis, 3. adaptation (Rzepkowski 1992, 28). The terms discussed below all refer to the third phase and describe *adaptation processes* in the course of interaction between two religious systems. *Adaptation* as a technical term itself is defined in Christian missionary theology as "changing the form of Christian theological ideas and practice so that they can be understood in a cultural context different from that of the communicator" (Moreau 2000a, 34). The term is often used interchangeably with *accommodation*, which in missionary practice means the accommodation of the rituals, practices, and styles of the missionary's church to those of the recipient culture (Hunsberger 2000, 31). It indicates a conscious process of adaptation, done with the willingness to adopt some forms of the recipient culture and leave aside some of the sending church.

The underlying idea behind adaptation and accommodation is *indigenization*, which describes "the 'translatability' of the universal Christian faith into the forms and

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images borrowed from Mediterranean and Middle-Eastern cultures and were reinterpreted in a Christian context.

[97] Cf. also the letter from Pope Formosus to the bishops of the Anglo-Saxon church (mentioned in footnote 18), in which he blamed them for having failed to act against paganism, and reminded them of their responsibilities.

symbols of the particular cultures of the world" (Conn 2000, 481). This "translation" can take the form of *contextualization* (or *inculturation*),[98] that is the integration of values, ideas and teachings of the church into the recipient culture by the members of the recipient community (Moreau 2000b, 476). It goes beyond accommodation in the sense that it concentrates on the insiders of the recipient culture rather than translating Christian concepts in a new cultural setting by outsiders. Although in missionary terminology contextualization is usually associated with theology, it is manifested in various areas of religious life: in church architecture, rituals, symbols, church administration, or in the present context in visual representations and iconography.

Among the terms discussed above, it is contextualization that seems (for now) to describe the situation in the Anglo-Scandinavian communities most accurately, but we have to depart from the missionary theological definition slightly in order to emphasize the mutual nature of this process. It is not quite obvious whether it is only the settling Scandinavians who can be defined as the target group here. The local Anglo-Saxon population was equally influenced by the native tradition imported by the new settlers, a tradition that was also familiar to them in many ways, and had already found its way into Anglo-Saxon Christianity.[99]

Syncretism

The term that is used most often in scholarly literature to describe the process and result of the encounter of the Scandinavians with Christianity is syncretism. In missionary terminology *syncretism* denotes "the replacement or dilution of the essential truths of the gospel through the incorporation of non-Christian elements" (Moreau 2000c, 925), and as such it has a negative connotation. In cultural and historical research the meaning of the term has been broadened to a more neutral concept, but it lacks a clear and unambiguous definition. Generally the word syncretism is used to denote any mixture of two or more religions where elements of one religious system are adapted into another, and the two (or more) religious systems merge and influence each other mutually (Ringgren 1969, 7). Sometimes it is also used in cases when elements of one religion are accepted into

[98] Inculturation is generally preferred by Roman Catholics, while contextualization is used by Protestants. The two terms describe basically the same idea. The only difference between the two concerns the role of church tradition, which is more of theological than of practical significance.

[99] James C. Russell (1994, 162) described the two directions of this process in the context of the conversion of the Germanic peoples in the early medieval period as processes of Christianization and Germanization.

another without changing the character of the receiving religion, even though in those cases the term accommodation is more preferable. Syncretism always denotes a transitional phase, therefore it is usually a dynamic and short-lived phenomenon.

The ambiguity of the definition is rooted in the fact that every encounter of religions is unique. In order to understand the nature of a particular encounter, it has to be examined in a sociological, political, and psychological context, besides the traditional historical and philological approach usually taken. There are two main things to be examined here: the conditions of the encounter, that is, the external factors that necessitated the adaptation process, and the result or outcome.

The situation in the North

The conditions

The adaptation or accommodation of foreign elements in a religious system is always motivated by discontent with the present religion, which can result from a change in the social, political, and economic conditions of a community and its openness to the religion of the neighbors which can offer answers to the new questions. The need of accommodation and conversion was created in the Anglo-Scandinavian settlement areas by a change in the political, social, and economic circumstances. The former raiders and warriors from Scandinavia settled down in areas populated by the Anglo-Saxons, and their leaders formed a new type of social elite in these communities. In economic terms they converted from raiders to farmers and traders, and created an agricultural society with a strong element of commerce, especially in the York metropolitan area and the coastal areas. The new settlers' interest in Christianity was motivated by political and social pressure and the need for social integration. Different social groups had different levels of motivation in the conversion. Christianity as a social institution represented power, both political and intellectual, which appealed to the new Scandinavian elite, and as the religion of the local population it also proved to be a means of social integration for the rest of the settlers, who engaged in economic and social interaction, such as intermarriage, with the local population from early on. Even though it was mostly Scandinavians who constituted the social elite in the mixed communities, the social prestige of Anglo-Saxon Christianity seemed higher than that of their native religion, which led to an openness towards it on the part of the new settlers.

This openness towards Christianity was promoted not only by social need, but also by the *structural openness* and flexibility of the native religious system itself. The Nordic paganism of the settlers was a non-codified, non-centralized, and non-institutionalized religion (with considerable geographical differences) that was more open to adopting foreign influences than universal religions. Finally a certain *psychological readiness and intellectual ability* on the part of individuals was also needed to facilitate the accommodation process. This way of thinking, which is best characterized as figurative thinking, will be examined more closely in the next chapter.

The outcome

The ultimate result of the encounter of the Scandinavian settlers with Christianity was their conversion to the new religion. However, this process was a gradual one and stretched over a few generations in terms of real (individual) conversion. The carvings with pagan iconography, all created within an interval of less than two centuries (from the mid-ninth to early eleventh centuries), illustrate the first and most creative phase of the encounter of the two religions, that of accommodation and contextualization, where elements of the traditional religion and lore were still recognized and associated with their original cultural context, even if their user communities had already set off in the direction of accepting Christianity. The integration of native elements is understandable if we consider that the only way the Scandinavians could understand Christianity was through the thought patterns of their old religion (cf. Ringgren 1969, 12). However, probably due to the conscious opposition of the Church and the influence of institutionalized Christian teaching, the integrated native elements disappeared within a few generations. The accommodation was a short-lived phenomenon, at least in terms of artistic production, which shows the fast adaptation of the settlers to local conditions.

As documents of this first phase of adaptation, many of the carvings demonstrate some sense of "syncresis" between Scandinavian paganism and Anglo-Saxon Christianity, perhaps most prominently the Gosforth cross and the 'Fishing Stone'. John McKinnel (1989, 50) denied the idea of "syncretism" in this context, and argued for only an exemplary use of the pagan material by unfavorable comparison to the superior and predetermined Christian message. This might be true for the Gosforth cross, the 'Fishing Stone', or possibly the Leeds crosses if we examine them as individual monuments or an

isolated group, but in the context of the other carvings the idea of such a direct opposition seems less probable. Many of the carvings with pagan iconographical elements functioned as commemorative monuments, and the commemorative use of pagan motifs presupposed a positive attitude towards the heroes and gods depicted. There is clearly a certain degree of adaptation here in terms of demythologizing these characters and stories and integrating them into the Christian world-view and into the Christian artistic tradition. But the two religions never merged in the traditional sense of syncretism, and the system of Christian thought remained largely unaltered. It was only enriched by the pagan elements, because a need was felt to integrate or accommodate certain aspects of the original religion to promote the understanding of the new religion and to satisfy specific sociocultural needs. The nature of the (rather selective) pagan narrative material that appears on the stone monuments discussed above reflects these needs.

Differences between the old and the new religions

The sociocultural differences were also reflected in the fundamental differences between the old and the new religions. The social and cultural background of Nordic paganism was the heroic warrior society, which provided and was manifested in a rich oral tradition imported from the Scandinavian homeland. The main concepts and ethics of the heroic tradition, and Germanic paganism in general,[100] differed from the Christian teaching and had to be reconciled. The acceptance of Christianity required and meant more than the introduction of the cult of a new deity who had to be incorporated into the existing pantheon. The radical monotheism of Christianity discredited all other deities and demanded undivided devotion towards the only God, which called into question the cornerstones of the old world order. Consequently, Christianity restructured the traditional ethical system and imposed a new direction on history.

Germanic paganism (or in this case its manifestation in the religion of the Scandinavian settlers) was a predominantly world-accepting and folk-centered world-view, as opposed to the predominantly world-rejecting, individualistic, and soteriological world-view of Christianity (Russel 1994, 176). Its this-world-oriented and folk-centered

[100] Due to the diverse nature of Germanic paganism both in temporal and geographical terms, it is more precise to use the term Scandinavian or Nordic paganism to refer to the religion of the Scandinavian settlers. However, since many of the statements below do equally apply to various Germanic peoples, Continental, insular, or Scandinavian, the more general (and vague) term of Germanic paganism will also be used.

nature was also reflected in its temporal orientation: instead of focusing on the future, and ultimately on eschatology, as Christianity did, Germanic paganism was essentially past-oriented, because it was the past that shaped the present of the community and the individual and formed their cultural identity. The conversion to Christianity required a complete reorientation in temporal sense, since what the essentially future-oriented and eschatological Christianity could offer was basically freeing the believer from this world that he had no desire to be parted from (cf. Bauschatz 1982, 154). The past, which constituted the shared identity of the Germanic community, had to be incorporated into the temporal sequence of Christianity in order to preserve the continuation of cultural values and some degree of cultural integrity. (For a detailed discussion on the concept of time see chapter 5.)

There were also a number of discrepancies on the level of basic concepts. Death and sacrifice had a different significance and meaning, and the new god, Christ the Lord, was interpreted as a leader of heroic qualities, in spite of his sacrificial role (cf. for example, the *Dream of the Rood*, or the discussion of the Gosforth cross above). In the traditional religion death was not seen as the absolute end, but rather a transmission into a different kind of existence, and also the means to earn the reward of fame and remembrance in the community, which secured a continuous place in this world, instead of an abstract spiritual reward in afterlife. Scandinavian paganism seems to have had no spiritual conceptions of life after death, it was more concentrated on the reality of present life (Ellis 1943, 147). It is unlikely that they saw a dualistic division between the dead body and a further existing soul. In the case of barrow burials, the dead continued to exist in the graves in their physical forms, often bearing marks of the means of their death (Simek 1993, 57-58), or they took various supplies of this life with them in the form of grave goods.

As we have seen above, the Nordic concept of the place of afterlife, Valhalla, underwent some changes in the course of time, but it was essentially a cheerful place, a hall of feasting and fighting. Originally Hel, the realm of the dead, was not a place of punishment either, and the criteria on the basis of which one landed there did not correspond to the Christian concept of sin.[101] The obsession with salvation and the fear of

[101] It is hardly possible to generalize about the Germanic concepts of life after death. Burial customs provide no information about the exact kind of life after death or the form of existence, and most of the extant literary sources, especially Snorri's account of Hel, already show Christian influence.

hell that inspired medieval men only entered the scene later (Le Goff 1988, 187, cited in Russel 1994, 162) when the concept of sin in a Christian sense became incorporated into the ethical system. Instead of the fear of death and punishment, it was the fear of loss, especially in a social sense, that worried members of the warrior society.[102]

The social circumstances and ethical code of the warrior society also influenced the role of the individual worshipper. Compared to believers of the Christian faith, adherents of northern paganism were characterized as thinking more collectively and as being more community-centered (and community-dependent). The individual worshipper experienced his gods as supernatural companions (who, according to saga literature, sometimes appeared among humans), rather than omnipotent spiritual entities. Even though a few references to oaths and invocations are recorded in literary sources, praying seems to have been primarily a sacerdotal duty, and the main facts of northern religion were sacrifice and ethics (Ström 1990, 374).

Christianity also initiated a major change in the way people perceived the relationship of man and nature. It forced a sharper division between animate and inanimate, between the living and the dead, and ultimately between man and nature, and with that the desacralization of the natural world began.[103]

The Viking impact: addition, revival, or strengthening?

According to historians of the Victorian age, the Danes were a second wave of "English" settlers "bringing back to an England that had forgotten its origins the barbaric England of its pirate forefathers" (Green 1874, 43, cited in Trafford 2000, 22). Worded this way, this is of course not true, but the Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavian invaders were not as different as is often suggested. As we have seen above, several aspects of the religion of the Scandinavian settlers were present in some form in the native religion of the Anglo-Saxons, and traits of Anglo-Saxon paganism survived in the Christianized communities in the form of folk traditions and popular piety, or became incorporated into the insular tradition of Christianity. Due to the shared cultural tradition of the Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians as well as the presence of syncretic elements in Anglo-

[102] Various aspects of loss found their elaborate literary manifestations in the Old English elegies of the Exeter Book.

[103] The speaking cross of the *Dream of the Rood* as well as a number of riddles in the Exeter Book reflect the pre-Christian Anglo-Saxons' intimate relation to the world of inanimate things and its survival in the insular Christian tradition.

Saxon Christianity, it is often difficult to detect the nature of the influence of the new settlers.

By the time of the arrival of the Viking raiders and settlers, a unique insular version of Christian culture developed in Anglo-Saxon England, which was based upon a number of different cultural traditions that made up or influenced Anglo-Saxon culture. The eldest, pre-Anglo-Saxon layer was the Romano-British culture, which developed during the Roman occupation. The first Christian communities that were formed in the late Roman period had largely disappeared by the time of the arrival of the Germanic tribes, but a few places show some continuity of worship. The invading Germanic tribes (the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Frisians) forced much of the local Romano-British and Celtic population to the western and northern areas of the island, to Ireland, and to the western shore of the Continent, and assimilated the remaining local population.[104] The invaders brought along their continental Germanic paganism and a rich oral tradition from their homelands, but they soon became the target of Christian missionary efforts from two directions. Roman Christianity arrived with St. Augustine in 597, sent by Pope Gregory the Great, and targeted the kingdom of Kent and the southern regions, while adherents of Celtic Christianity started christianizing the northern areas in the early seventh century. Differences between the two churches, rooted in liturgical, organizational, and political matters, were finally resolved at the Synod of Whitby in 664, which ended with the supremacy of Rome. In addition to the introduction of the Christian faith, both Roman and Celtic Christianity brought along additional cultural influences, Mediterranean and Celtic respectively, which had already been incorporated into Christianity and which manifested themselves primarily in art and literature.

St. Gregory's missionary policy (cf. his letter to Mellitus in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* I, 30) promoted tolerance towards the native culture and religion, and ultimately resulted in the accommodation of indigenous cultural elements in Christianity and the formation of the Anglo-Saxon or insular Christian culture. The eighth century in particular saw the creation of a number of literary and artistic works that merged the native heroic tradition of Germanic paganism with the Christian message. For example, Cynewulf's *Elene* and the depiction of the Last Judgement in *Christ* both make use of

heroic imagery and give a heroic overtone to their Christian subject matter. The most outstanding example of this tendency is probably *The Dream of the Rood*, surviving in the Vercelli Book (and in an earlier and shorter version as an inscription on the Ruthwell cross), where the cross appears as a retainer, Christ as a heroic warrior, and the Crucifixion as a heroic act (implying the conflict of sacrifice and murder), and where faith is described in terms of loyalty and appears in accordance with the heroic code of the society. In visual arts, the Franks Casket, an early eighth-century whalebone casket of Northumbrian origin, displays the mixing of three different traditions: Roman (semi)history, Anglo-Saxon heroic and mythological narratives, and biblical elements.

From a Christian perspective, the encounter of the Vikings with Christianity launched a second phase of Germanization of (already "Anglo-Saxonized") Christianity. For the Christian Anglo-Saxons some of the imported cultural material might have appeared new and unfamiliar, but most stories, gods, and heroes might have been well-known if remembered from their own native tradition. The import of the Scandinavian narrative material and customs enriched the culture of the Anglo-Saxon communities in various ways and to various degrees. In some cases new stories and narrative elements (such as certain episodes of the Ragnarök story or aspects of Valhalla) were introduced, alongside new poetic styles, imagery, and iconography. Some stories of gods and heroes that were well-known in the British Isles already in the pre-Viking period experienced a shift of emphasis as a result of the encounter with the northern version of the same myth (for example, the element of flight seems to have become the focus of interest in the Weland legend), or the insular tradition underwent some degree of modification in the Scandinavian settlement areas, as in the case of the valkyrie tradition. Finally, the Hiberno-Norse settlers of the western areas also popularized Christian and non-Christian elements in art that originated in the Celtic tradition (such as the "hart and hound" motif and ring-headed crosses).

For the Scandinavians the encounter with Christianity in the Anglo-Saxon communities was of course not the first contact with the new religion. They had encountered Christianity through Continental cultural and trade contacts, during their

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[104] The Celtic names of early southern Anglo-Saxon kings mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* suggest intermarriage between the Anglo-Saxons and the Celts. (Pointed out by Gale Owen-Crocker in private correspondence.)

raids on the Continent, and during their settlement in Ireland.[105] Christianity also offered several points of similarity with the native religion, which facilitated a smooth accommodation process and an openness to the new religion. For example, the idea of a dying god who rose again was known from ancient fertility myths, the sacrificed god hanging upon a tree was familiar from the myth of Odin on Yggdrasil, or the bound demon and the concept of doomsday with all its horrors were all part of the pagan tradition even before the coming of Christianity (Davidson 1982, 124). The first step towards the acceptance of Christianity was the recognition of these shared elements and their accommodation into the new tradition.

Christian approaches to paganism

Before returning to the assessment of the cultural and intellectual process taking place in the Anglo-Scandinavian communities, one more thing need to be considered briefly. This is the attitude of the Christian Anglo-Saxons to pagan gods and practices (of native and later of Scandinavian origin), which reflects the contemporaries' approach to the problem of religious encounter.

The surviving sources from the pre-Viking period reveal hardly any explicit information about early Anglo-Saxon paganism. The only four unambiguous references to pagan practice in pre-Viking England are Pope Gregory's letter to Mellitus and the account of King Edwin's conversion in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* (I.30 and II.13, respectively), Bede's *De temporum ratione (De mensibus anglorum)* on the pagan names of the months, and Aldhelm's letter (no. 5) to Heahfrið (Johnson 1995, 35). The survival of the pagan tradition is indirectly reflected in literature and art in a number of deliberate attempts to harmonize pagan and Christian elements. In *Beowulf*, for example, the pagan monster Grendel is interpreted as an offspring of Cain, and the Franks Casket shows Weland sharing the front panel with the Adoration of the Magi. Besides being a natural approach to reconcile coexisting but conflicting cultural traditions, moderate harmonization was also promoted by the early missionaries, following the advice of Pope Gregory to adapt pagan practices to Christian use rather than prohibit them. The names of

[105] Some early syncretic aspects of Norse paganism, which had been pointed out (justly or not) among others by Sophus Bugge already at the end of the nineteenth century in connection with the Balder myth and Odin's sacrifice on Yggdrasil (cf. Bugge 1889), might have originated in this early (pre-conversion) influence of Christianity on the northern tradition.

heathen gods have been preserved in the English names of the weekdays (Tiw in OE *tiwesdæg* 'Tuesday', Woden in OE *wodnesdæg* 'Wednesday', Thor in OE *thursdæg* 'Thursday', and Frigg in OE *frigedæg* 'Friday'), coined after the Latin names, as well as in a number of placenames. Pagan gods and heroes found their way not only into Christian poetry and art but also into royal genealogies and became integrated into the respectable and legitimate past of the Anglo-Saxons.

It is hard to know how much the Anglo-Saxons preserved from their heathen traditions and actual practices by the time of the arrival of the Scandinavian raiders and settlers, and what form of Germanic paganism the Vikings practiced in the time of the invasion and settlement. Late Anglo-Saxon sources, such as Æthelweard's *Chronicon* and Ælfric's *De falsis diis*, show that there was some interest in the pagan past as well as some knowledge of the heathen tradition (native and Scandinavian) in the ecclesiastical circles of the early eleventh century. Ælfric's relation to his pagan material was probably characteristic for other southern ecclesiastics of the period. He had only little detailed knowledge of the pagan gods and practices of his Anglo-Saxon ancestors and of the Scandinavians, but he was certainly familiar with Bede's *Historia* and *De temporum ratione*. In spite of the clearly oppositional standpoint of his *De falsis diis*, he carefully "toned down" the demonization of the pagan gods compared to his source for the sermon, Martin of Braga's *De correctione rusticorum*. Interestingly enough, he also avoided mentioning the Anglo-Saxon forms of the gods' names. According to David Johnson (1995, 59), he was motivated by political considerations, especially in omitting any demonization of Woden, since Woden was remembered as the ancestor in many royal genealogies, including also that of Wessex, to which his two most influential patrons also belonged. He probably did make the connection between Odin and Woden, and he could also expect his audience to do so. However, while the two versions of the god were seen as referring to one and the same "person," their cults were judged differently: while his veneration among the Danes was condemned, his euhemeristic interpretation among the Anglo-Saxons was silently accepted.

The example of Ælfric suggests a double approach to paganism among the Christian Anglo-Saxons, especially in ecclesiastical circles. While the radical approach of the *interpretatio christiana*, which meant a diabolization of the heathen gods and a demonization of all beings of lower mythology, together with the condemnation of pagan

practices was readily applied in connection with the Scandinavians, the euhemeristic approach of historicizing saved the gods and heroes of the insular tradition as well as the reputation of their own pagan ancestors.

Euhemerism

Euhemerism was based on the presupposition that previous generations of respectable pagan ancestors were in error regarding their religious beliefs. Their so-called gods were merely mortal men of stature from long past times who, through the respect of their descendants, became falsely worshipped as gods.[106]

Euhemerism was named after Euhemeros of Messene (ca. 300 BC) who described the ancient gods as mortal people who, after dying normal deaths, were buried in places that he could identify. His work was translated into Latin by (N)ennius, but both the original and the translation were lost except for a few quotations, mostly in Lactantius. The euhemeristic interpretation of pagan gods was eagerly accepted by the early fathers who applied it in dealing with classical pagan deities, [107] and it was fostered by stories of pagan poets who related about the human frailty and sinfulness of the gods. The earliest occurrence of the statement that all pagan gods were mere men is found in the *Cohortatio ad gentes* of Clement of Alexandria (115-217), and was later taken up by Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Lactantius, Eusebius, and Augustine of Hippo (Cooke 1927, 397-399).

Euhemerization in the apologetic and patristic tradition almost always involved the concept of demonization as well, which was based on Psalm 96:5, contrasting pagan gods with the Lord, the maker of Heaven. St. Augustine of Hippo, probably the most influential of the early fathers, emphasized the diabolical nature of heathen gods and interpreted them as malign spirits who tricked men into worshipping them. It was Isidore of Seville who broke with the tradition of diabolization and separated the demonic from the euhemeristic. He gave a new direction to the euhemeristic interpretation that had been developed by the early fathers by situating the gods in world history. In his hands

[106] Strictly speaking, euhemerism explains only the origin of the gods, but not how they continued to be worshipped throughout generations. In order to explain that, two theories had been advanced. According to the first, mankind had been deceived by poets and myth-makers who had fabricated the stories of their deification and powers. The second explanation claimed that the so-called gods came to possess actual power (a) through the influence of demons or satanic forces, or (b) through the influence of planets (of the same name in the case of classical gods). (Cooke 1927, 396)

[107] The Hebraic background for euhemeristic interpretation was provided in the Book of Wisdom (14: 15-21), which explains some ways in which idolatry originated. Echoes of this passage are found in many of the fathers.

euhemerization was not a tool of polemic any more, but rather an "auxiliary to historical research." He developed a positive view of the pagan gods, whom he saw as heroic figures, the leaders and pioneers of civilization, and thus the benefactors of humanity (Seznec 1961, 13-15). It is through him that this approach was transmitted to medieval Europe and came to be elaborated, especially in the high and late medieval periods with their growing interest in the ancient world and classical paganism.

In Anglo-Saxon England the euhemeristic interpretation of pagan gods seems to have been accepted already in the early eighth century, as it is apparent in a letter of Bishop Daniel of Winchester to St. Boniface (no. 23, dated 722-732) on converting the heathen in Germany, and it continued to flourish throughout Anglo-Saxon period. The notion of euhemerization also prevailed in medieval Iceland, where Christian authors, especially Snorri Sturluson, felt the need to reconcile the conflicts between their native tradition and Christianity. In the *Prose Edda* Snorri made an attempt to rationalize his pagan sources and to point out a Christian moral in them without demonizing the gods of his ancestors. He inserted his gods temporally and geographically in world history and explained them as ancient heroes worshipped by men who had lost their true understanding of God (cf. "Prologue to the Prose Edda" in Hány 1990, 185ff). The significance of this attempt of historicizing and euhemerizing, both in Anglo-Saxon England and in later in Iceland, was that it saved the pagan deities from being condemned as devils while also integrating the pagan mythical past into the history of the ancient world, both biblical and antique.

The Anglo-Scandinavian communities revisited: The process of accommodation

As the above survey has shown, the cultural and intellectual process of integration that took place in the Anglo-Scandinavian communities of northern England and found its visual expression in the stone carvings examined above can be approached and defined in various ways. The terms contextualization, syncretism, and euhemerization all reveal important aspects of the process, but at the same time ignore others. It is important to emphasize that this cultural and religious integration process in the Anglo-Scandinavian communities was primarily socially motivated, happened more or less spontaneously (i.e. no explicit missionary effort was involved), and was facilitated by the openness of the Scandinavian religious system and the intellectual readiness of the members of the

communities. The ultimate (yet unconscious) goal of the process was to *bring into concord* conflicting views of the world in order to enable the settlers to *adapt* to the new social and political circumstances. This is exactly what the word *accommodate* refers to in its original meaning: to make fit, suitable, or congruous, to bring into agreement or concord, to adapt. It is therefore perhaps the word *accommodation* that describes this process most accurately, if we free this loaded term from most of its previous theoretical connotations.

The carvings examined above, our visual documents of this cultural process, suggest that their sculptors, patrons, and audience were familiar with both the Scandinavian and the Christian religious systems in terms of symbolism and imagery, and they were willing to compare them. Since the monuments are primarily Christian by nature and most of them are associated with ecclesiastical sites, the accommodation process can be defined as an integration of the pagan gods and heroes (as well as certain heroic concepts) into the Christian system. This presupposes not only a conceptual and ethical, but also a temporal readjustment, and calls for a reconciliation of the Germanic and Christian concepts of time and history. (See next chapter.)

However, the phenomenon taking place in the Anglo-Scandinavian communities of northern England goes beyond euhemerism, which only grasps the process from a Christian point of view. In addition to the integration (or temporal reconciliation) of pagan gods and heroes and Christian history, parallels are drawn between them and the Christian tradition, finding correspondences between the two systems, approaching one system in terms of the other by accommodating and contextualizing elements of one tradition in terms of those of the other tradition. The uniqueness of this intellectual process reflected on Viking-age carvings was recognized early in the scholarly literature. Sophus Bugge called it "pagan iconography of Christian ideas," Richard Bailey (1981, 87, commenting on the 'Fishing Stone') described it as "radical theological speculation" and a "commentary from one theological system on another." Hilda R.E. Davidson (1950, 124), pointing out the difficulty of determining the borderline between pagan and Christian in cases of obvious parallels between some incidents from the Christian tradition and others from pagan myths, noted that "the sculptors themselves may have rejoiced in such parallels, and may have used them deliberately, turning a pre-Christian story to a new use." It seems beyond dispute that craftsmen like the Gosforth Master or the carvers of the

Leeds crosses were aware of obvious parallels between heathen legends and Christian teaching.

The comparison of characters and stories in search of shared references and the confirmation of a sense of unity by finding parallels recall the Christian interpretative strategy of typology, an approach that was well-known in Anglo-Saxon England and influenced medieval thinking in general. Typology was of course an interpretative and exegetical tool of "educated" Christians, therefore it can hardly be applied to explain the Viking-age monuments. Similarities and differences between typology and typological thinking and the intellectual background of the accommodation process that took place in the Anglo-Scandinavian communities will be explored in the next chapter.

5. FIGURATIVE THINKING

Typology and/versus figurative thinking

As an interpretative method in biblical exegesis, the search for shared patterns throughout history is denoted with the term typology. Since sculptural evidence suggests a certain degree of comparison between the pagan and Christian narrative traditions with respect to various kinds of shared patterns, typology, and a criticism thereof, seems to be an obvious starting point to understand the logic behind the iconographical programs of the monuments as well as the working of the minds who created them. Typology has long shaped the organization and iconographical program of Christian works of art, thus an association of this exegetical interpretative method with visual arts is by no means unusual. Typological representations appeared already in early Christian art (cf. for example, the Old Testament scenes on catacomb paintings prefiguring salvation and redemption, the picture cycles on the doors of S. Sabina in Rome, or the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus), and its early presence in the British Isles, in fact, the first reference to visual typology in early medieval Western art, is recorded by Bede in the *Historia abbatum*, where he describes pictures brought back by Benedict Biscop from Rome to Jarrow and set up on the walls of the church arranged in typological concordance (cf. Plummer 1896, I, 373).

Typology

Typology is a hermeneutic concept in which a biblical place (Jerusalem, Zion), person (Adam, Melchizedek), event (flood, brazen serpent), institution (feasts, covenant), office (prophet, priest, king), or object (tabernacle, altar, incense) becomes a pattern by which later persons or places are interpreted due to the unity of events within salvation-history (Bromiley 1988, 930). Typological interpretation is essentially the recognition of these patterns of salvation events, where (usually) Old Testament events anticipate New Testament ones. The anticipations are called types, the fulfillments antitypes. In addition to links between the Old and the New Testaments, there are several correspondences within the Old Testament, and there is also valid typological relationship between New Testament imagery and its fulfillment in the description of the end times.

The Bible itself contains several references of typological nature: Jesus himself talks about Jonah as a paradigm of his own death and resurrection (Mat 12:39; 16:4; Luke 11:29), Noah's salvation is associated with baptism (1 Peter 3:20-1), and the sacrifice of Isaac appears as the type of Christ's sacrificial death (Hebrews 11:17 and 19; Galatians 3:15-16). The origin of typological interpretation goes back to Paul, who was the first to call the Hebrew Bible the "Old Testament." This appellation presupposes not only a correspondence between the events described there and the life of Christ, and thus recognizes the unity of the two testaments, but it also emphasizes the fulfillment of the Old Testament events in the New Testament. The church fathers blended typology with Hellenistic allegory and replaced the historical focus of the biblical period with a spiritual sense, which led to some degree of terminological confusion in medieval practice.[108]

Following the footsteps of the church fathers, typological interpretation was also embraced among the Anglo-Saxons. In addition to Bede's reference to visual typology in the church of St. Paul in Jarrow and his theoretical considerations in *De arte metrica et de schematibus tropis*, he uses typological references also in his own commentaries, for example, on Genesis, where he refers to the equation between the horns of the ram and the ends of the cross. Or to give a late Anglo-Saxon example, Ælfric, in the preface to his translation of Genesis, says that Abraham prefigured (or with the Old English expression *hafde getacnunge* 'signified, indicated, or denoted') the Father while Isaac was the prefiguration of Christ, who was sacrificed for our redemption.

Type and antitype

Typological interpretation is based on the idea of the unity of history through God's plan of salvation. Since salvation history is documented in the two Testaments of the Bible, traditionally types are taken from the Old Testament and antitypes from the New Testament. These scriptural types are the instruments of prophesy which point

[108] In his discussion of allegory in *De arte metrica et de schematibus tropis*, Bede clearly distinguishes between "historical allegory" and "verbal allegory" and lists a number of varieties of this trope. By "historical allegory" he means an event in time which refers to another reality outside of itself, in other words, which prefigures an event typologically. For a "proper" use of the term allegory he refers to Pope Gregory the Great, who in his *Moralia* uses the term in a restricted sense referring only to typological allegory. (cf. Bede 1991, 192ff (Latin) / 199ff (English), especially p. 207 and Calvin B. Kendall's "Introduction," p. 25ff) The clear-cut differentiation between typology and allegory is a modern theoretical phenomenon which arose from the need of the clarity of terminology. According to modern definitions, in typology "the relationship between type and antitype is real and historical, based upon an analogous

towards the fulfillment of the promise of salvation. Typological prophesy occurs throughout the Bible and can be considered the "normal" way that the prophets, including Jesus, spoke of the future (Garrett 1996, 785). The unity of events in redemptive history is manifested in patterns recurring according to God's plan. The Greek word *týpos* meaning 'pattern, model' grasps this concept of shared patterns. The real model is actually in the antitype, which is not only "pre-figured" in the type, but it also fulfills it, completing the divine purpose implicit in the earlier events.

Even though typological interpretation commonly focuses on links between the Old and the New Testaments, types can also be found outside the Old Testament, and even outside the Scripture. Coping with cultural traditions of various origins and trying to justify the legitimacy of non-biblical traditions (primarily Hellenic and Roman), the early Fathers soon discovered a number of links between the Bible and their native traditions and interpreted non-biblical narratives and historical events as types. To describe these special cases of Christian typological thinking, Friedrich Ohly introduced the terms *halbbiblische Typologie* (semi-biblical typology) for the cases when either the type or the antitype is non-biblical, and *außerbiblische Typologie* (non-biblical typology) for the cases when neither the type nor the antitype comes from the Bible, yet the basis of their relatedness lies in Christian (biblical) teaching.[109] Examples for semi-biblical typology are the concordance between Orpheus or Socrates and Christ, or between Salomon and Constantine the Great. Non-biblical typological interpretations are, for example, Vergil and Ovid as types and Juvencus as their antitype, or Alexander the Great as the type of the Antichrist, or the Pantheon as a prefiguration of St. Peter's in Rome (Ohly 1977c, 366). Ohly's two terms have been criticized for being illegitimate and incompatible with theological teaching. Whether we insist on using the word typology for describing this phenomenon or not (which in my opinion is legitimate since it is inspired by biblical typology and follows the same principles even as it leaves the cultural and historical boundaries of the Scripture), it is unquestionable that an analytical thinking with respect to shared patterns did exist already among the early Fathers and in their communities that had to cope with different cultural heritages.

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correspondence that exists between them. An allegory is indirect and implicit, based upon a metaphorical correspondence between spiritual ideas that lie under the text rather than within it" (Osborne 1988, 931).

[109] The two terms were first introduced by Ohly in 1940 in his *Sage und Legende in der Kaiserchronik* (Münster, 1940; reprint Darmstadt 1968). For a detailed discussion of the terms, cf. Friedrich Ohly, "Halbbiblische und außerbiblische Typologie" (1977).

Ohly's semi-biblical typology seems to be a tempting approach to explain the iconography of the Viking-age monuments discussed above, however it does not describe the phenomenon perfectly. Similarly to typology, the organizing thought behind the choice of images on the sculptures is centered on establishing links and cross-references and finding parallels between biblical and non-biblical phenomena. However, it is not nearly as systematic as typology, and the biblical parallel or "antitype" does not necessarily fulfill the non-biblical "type" in which it is prefigured, or rather by which it is paralleled. Therefore, it is more appropriate to see the iconography of the sculptures as evidence of a particular type of thinking which is based on the recurrence of patterns. Using the well-known word *figura*[110] for these patterns, I suggest the term *figurative thinking* to describe this intellectual phenomenon.

The concept of figurative thinking

Figura, figurative thinking, and figural interpretation are by no means new terms in medieval scholarship. For decades the study of typological interpretation has been dominated by Erich Auerbach's essay "Figura" and his definition of figural (i.e. typological) interpretation. The Auerbachian understanding of figural interpretation heavily influenced the understanding of the term in the study of medieval exegesis and literature.[111]

Auerbach's understanding of typological interpretation is characterized by four major features (after Emmerson 1992, 9ff). (1) First of all, Auerbach operates with a strict definition of typology, according to which it is an exegetical method with types taken from the Old Testament and antitypes from the New Testament, even though there are New Testament types as well as profane and pagan examples known from the early Fathers on. Auerbach also dismisses symbols as prefigurations (e.g. the brazen serpent that Moses raised before the Israelites, which often features in medieval art as a prefiguration of the Crucifixion). (2) He privileges historical events (over literary symbols and prophetic images) found in historical narratives (rather than in poetic, prophetic, and

[110] The word *figura* originally meant 'plastic form' (cf. Auerbach 1984, 11), which happens to fit nicely this study of sculpture.

[111] Auerbach's essay was originally published in German in 1944 (in *Neue Dantestudien*, Istanbul, pp. 11-71). An English translation (by Ralph Manheim) was published years later, in 1959, in a collection of essays (*Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, New York, 11-76), which was reprinted in 1984 as volume 9 of the series *Theory and History of Literature* (Minneapolis, pp. 11-76). All references to the essay are based on the latter edition.

other literary forms). (3) He emphasizes the type over the antitype, even though from a Christian point of view it is the truth revealed by the antitype that matters. (4) And finally he makes a radical distinction between figural interpretation and other forms of exegesis such as allegory and the other levels of biblical interpretation. As I have already pointed out above, this distinction makes sense for modern interpretative purposes, but it was not valid in the Middle Ages, since there was no pure form of typology, and medieval exegetical practice was characterized by a terminological jumble. Common allegory was also termed *figura*, while historic prefiguration was also termed *allegoria* as well as *figura* and *typus*.

To differentiate between Auerbach's concept of figural interpretation and our understanding of the intellectual process discussed, let us make a terminological distinction between the Auerbachian *figural* interpretation (as it is used in the 1959 English translation of the originally German article) and our *figurative* thinking in the context of Viking-age Northern England. While Auerbach's figural interpretation is based on strict biblical typology, and thus operates in type-antitype relations and the fulfillment of the earlier type in the later antitype, figurative thinking establishes connections between biblical and non-biblical events and characters with little or no emphasis on their temporal sequence and no fulfillment of a prophesy in the typological sense.

Both Auerbach's figural interpretation and figurative thinking share the idea of certain patterns being repeated in history, which creates a coherence of history and connections between events and people separated in time. But while figural interpretation presupposes a teleological concept of history (the grand plan of salvation), in the more general figurative understanding it is the coexistence, unity, and interrelation of past, present, and future that is emphasized, instead of the linearity of time. According to Auerbach's definition, "[f]igural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life" (Auerbach 1984, 53). In terms of typology, the types in the Northern English context would be the Scandinavian narratives, and the antitype the Christian salvation story. The Scandinavian narratives, however, function as parallels rather than as prefigurations, thus the antitypes do not encompass or fulfill these types, but are "illustrated" or enriched by

them. As far as the temporal relation of the two poles are concerned, they are both located in historical time (according to the belief of the Viking-age observers), but the temporal sequence is often ambiguous. For example, Christ's crucifixion is clearly a past event, but whether the Ragnarök is yet to come or it is part of the distant past is unclear. When compared to biblical typology, figurative thinking suggests an even more intertwined coexistence of past, present, and future where the past becomes a melting pot of culturally different narratives. In the process of religious accommodation the Christian salvation story becomes the "core narrative" and the other narratives participate in it by their shared patterns. This is a process of understanding and a method of explanation, but not biblical exegesis in the traditional sense. It is directed both towards the understanding of a special cultural situation and the Scripture.

Figurative thinking is based on the natural human desire to compare and relate new events, people, or phenomena to well-known things in order to understand them. The question has often been raised in connection with Viking-age sculpture (especially the 'Fishing Stone', the Gosforth cross, the Nunbornholme cross, and the two Leeds crosses) whether the mixed iconography represents an attempt to reconcile the pagan and Christian traditions—that is, the parallels between the pagan and Christian stories are emphasized—or whether they represent a conscious opposition of the two traditions with the stories being juxtaposed and the superiority of Christianity emphasized. Following the logic of figurative thinking, the emphasis is on the recurrence of patterns, thus juxtaposition and parallels essentially fall into the same category, since they are both based on the fact that the stories share certain narrative elements. Therefore, it makes little sense to try to determine whether, for example, on the Gosforth 'Fishing Stone' or on the Nunbornholme cross the "message" was to rule out the pagan tradition by showing negative examples, or whether they were seen as parallels. For the contemporary observer all stories formed part of one and the same "system," that is one historical tradition. The pagan mythological stories had lost their mythological status by then, and the stories were no longer about gods who were being venerated but about heroes of the distant past. The relationship between these narratives of different cultural origin became a dialectic one where one story involved or referred to another by sharing elements that linked them.

Similarly to biblical typology (cf. definition above), the elements shared between the stories and their characters vary greatly, and they suggest different levels of

association. From the recurrence of simple objects to shared ethical concepts and narrative patterns, various elements can promote the interconnection of different narratives. The links can be created by similar characters (e.g. the Midgard serpent and Leviathan, both nautical monsters, the representations of evil), comparable roles in history (Viðar and Christ, the savior sons of god/God), shared narrative structures (fishing for the nautical monster; or suffering self-sacrifice by being hung on a tree), common characteristic features (Weland's association with angels through his flight), recurring natural phenomena (the darkening of the sun or an earthquake taking place at the Crucifixion, the Apocalypse, and Ragnarök), or general ethical concepts (the fight between good and evil). Due to the composite character of the Germanic gods, characteristics and episodes of the lives of several different gods get equated with Christ on various levels (Odin, Thor, Viðar), instead of there being a one to one correspondence between a particular god and Christ (or any other biblical character or saint). The following chart, which summarizes the findings of chapter 3, provides an overview of the possible points of pagan-Christian overlap. (The chart presents only the main points of overlap. Further possible, but less probable, links are are discussed in the individual sections of chapter 3.)

Pagan elements	***Associated Christian material or Christian context***	***Points of overlap***
WELAND	• [pre-Viking evidence: *Deor*: Christian conclusion (consolation); *Franks Casket*: Adoration of the Magi]	
	• angels; eagle of St. John	• ability to fly; wings
SIGURD and the Völsung Legend	• certain aspects of Genesis	• serpent; act of eating illicitly and gaining knowledge; tree associated with knowledge
Sigurd the dragonslayer	• St. Michael (and the Serpent of the Apocalypse) [later also St. George]	• slaying a serpentine monster; victory over evil
Meal of Sigurd and Regin	• Eucharistic meal	• miracle of the blood; initiation where special knowledge is gained
THOR 's hammer, Mjöllnir	• [both cross and hammer shaped pendants worn as amulets]	
Thor's encounter with the Midgard serpent	• fishing for Leviathan	• fishing for the nautical monster representing evil
MIDGARD SERPENT	• Leviathan • Serpent of the Apocalypse	• serpentine (nautical) monsters representing evil

Fettering of FENRIR by Tyr Odin's fight with Fenrir Odin's death by being devoured by Fenrir	• Satan bound / Bound Evil • fishing for Leviathan • Jonah in the whale and its typological parallel in the Harrowing of Hell	• evil bound by fetters • encounter of (main) god and the monster of evil • god swallowed by monster
The bound LOKI	• Satan bound / Bound Evil	• evil bound by fetters, but breaks free at the end of time
RAGNARÖK	• Crucifixion • Apocalypse	• end of an era; "bordering events" • overlap includes the association of both Viðar and Odin with Christ; the bound evil breaks free; fire and earthquake; Heimdall's horn and the trumpets of the Apocalypse; horsemen and the Apocalyptic riders, etc. [further links listed in the discussion of Ragnarök in chapter 3]
ODIN	• Christ	• chief god • self-sacrifice on a tree; wounded / killed by spear • associated with the (positive) otherworld
YGGDRASIL	• Christ's cross	• tree of life / cosmic tree • place of the (main) god's self-sacrifice
VALKYRIES	• [possibly Resurrection symbols]	

In most cases the mere survival of a pagan iconographical element or story is in itself the indication that a legitimate pattern was found to integrate it in the newly encountered cultural tradition. (Cf. for example the survival of stories about Sigurd and Weland late into the Middle Ages.) Of course we cannot to exclude the possibility that some of the carvings that only display secular or pagan iconography were created by pagans ignorant of the Christian teaching or only superficially in contact with Christian culture.

The structure of time

The principle behind typological exegesis is that God has always had the same purpose in history, and he is consistent in his plan of salvation manifested in human history. Typology is based upon a chronological sequence, a progress in history, where the type precedes the antitype, but at the same time it also disregards chronology and

emphasizes the significance of conceptual links that connect different temporal layers. Especially in elaborate high and late medieval works of art relying on the principle of typology we find *ante legem* and *sub lege* types for every *sub gratia* antitype, which creates a network of references between different epochs of history. But in spite of the fact that typology, as Christianity in general, is based on a teleological concept of history, as an interpretative method it only works backwards in time, that is, retrospectively. Typological "proofs" are ineffective if they are read in "the order of time" (i.e. type → antitype), they can only be read "in the order of knowledge" (i.e. antitype → type). Similarly to typology, figurative thinking also disregards chronology, and instead of observing chronological links or those of cause and effect, it promotes a non-teleological understanding of time. This temporal aspect is clearly one of the most interesting features of figurative thinking, and it is the understanding of the structure of time that underwent the most dramatic changes since the Middle Ages. The discussion of figurative thinking and typology would not be complete without a brief survey of the understanding of time which underlay and enabled these ways of thinking and interpretation.

The Middle Ages had no single view of time, but a number of competing notions inherited from various cultural traditions.[112] Time was understood as a combination of "line + cursus + figura," three opposing yet coexisting temporal structures. From a human perspective the most natural perception of time is cyclic. Everyday life is determined by a number of different temporal cycles (cursus) the predictability of which gives a routine and a feeling of security. The cyclic understanding of time is based on a rhythm in events which is repetitive and recursive, and thus predictable. The recurrence is not always well defined or regular in interval, but it is in its content. There are three main types of cursus: (1) *natural cursus*, based on repetition in nature (e.g. days and nights, the seasons, or the pattern of growth and decay); (2) *liturgical cursus*, manifested in the daily routine of the canonical hours and the commemorative purpose of liturgy to recall biblical history each year; and (3) *metaphorical cursus* which accounts for recurring patterns in history. Unlike the first two, the third is not based on regularity. Like the Wheel of Fortune, it promises change and allows for an anticipation of a future different from the present, but the change is temporally unpredictable. The cyclic view of time is based on the experience of

[112] The following summary is largely based on Higgins 1989, 227ff.

past generations and it is essentially past-oriented, since it is the past that is reflected (and repeated) in the present.

The finite nature of individual human life also promotes another, a *linear* concept of time, one which emphasizes a distinct beginning and end. This linear concept of time projected onto the history of mankind goes back to the Hebrew sense of history, and it is commonly understood to be the predominant Christian (or we should rather say Augustinian) concept of history and time.[113] Christianity turned history into "salvation history" with God acting through his agents, and it introduced the ideas of the origin of time at Creation by separating day and night and the end of time on Judgement Day, which served as the two endpoints of liner time as it is perceived by humans. Since history is the unfolding of God's plan of salvation, it is teleological, shaped by design, and proceeds towards an end. The well-defined end and purpose of history makes it a future-oriented understanding with events that cannot be repeated.

The future-orientation of linear time and the past-orientation of cyclic time are united in the third model, *figurative* time, which was provided by the tradition of figural interpretation. In the figurative perception of time "past and future are fused in the present of the figure, filling it with meaning, while the meaning of the figure itself is diffused throughout all time" (Higgins 1989, 248). Thus unity of time is created and temporality is dissolved. (The figurative relation between events separated by time is more important then their chronological relationship.)

It is the lack of interest in chronology and the interrelatedness of past, present, and future which also characterizes the old Scandinavian perception of time and history. In general Old Norse mythology and literature show little concern for time and chronology. The study of the concept of time in Norse mythology is usually connected to the analysis of the structure of space in the mythic world. The sources reveal little descriptive detail of the mythological space. The mythic world has been described in scholarly literature by the binary opposition of two spatial axes, horizontal and vertical (cf. Meletinskij 1973-74 and Hastrup 1985, 50ff and 1990, cited in Clunies Ross 1994, 229f; cf. also Bauschatz 1982, 119-154). The two poles of the vertical axis are the heavens and the underworld connected by Yggdrasil, the cosmic tree, with the "well of fate" (*Urðarbrunnr*) at its root.

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[113] It was St. Augustine (in *De civitate Dei*, Book XII) who most vigorously articulated objections to the classical notion of recurrence and the Platonic ideas of eternal return, contrasting them to the "straight path" of Christian time (Higgins 1989, 230-231).

In temporal terms it expresses the irreversibility (and linearity) of time. The horizontal axis comprises the habitats of the gods, giants, and men, and "concerns what one might call a 'steady state' relationship between the gods and the giants, in which negative reciprocity is taken as an unchanging given" (Clunies Ross 1994, 229). This "reversible" time (Margaret Clunies Ross's term), where change brings about no significant development, guarantees that the cosmological order remains constant. The idea of a clear-cut opposition between the vertical and the horizontal models and the related concepts of irreversible and reversible time has been criticized by Jens Peter Schjødt, who pointed out, on the one hand, that Yggdrasil, the cosmic tree, was also associated with the notions of renewal, repetition, and return, and on the other, that the conflicts between gods and giants were in fact decisive in determining the cosmic order (1990, 54ff).

Similarly to the Christian Middle Ages, the perception of time in the North was also a combination of linear and cyclic structures. The linear aspect of mythic time can be detected in the succession of distinctive periods. The time span of Norse mythology can be divided into four major eras, but the chronology of the individual eras is often unclear. The four eras are (1) the mythical prehistory of the creation, that is Ymir's age; (2) the mythical present "which bears aspects of eternity as is stressed by the constant youth of the gods who eat Idun's apples to achieve their longevity;" (3) the eschatological end of time called Ragnarök; and finally (4) the distant future of the new world which will be created after the destruction of this world (Simek 1993, 334). It is the mythological present, the long period of Odin's reign (and the temporal framework of the majority of the myths), initiated by Ymir's murder, which is the most vague chronologically. Most events are said to have happened *í árdaga* 'in days of yore'. The sequence of related myths is relatively easy to determine, but the chronological relationship between these groups of myths is hard to establish. Even the Snorra Edda, which shows strong euhemeristic tendencies, seems "timeless": it only offers an occasional systematizing of myths, and the arrangement is topical rather than chronological. This expandable framework of myths made it possible to easily accommodate new gods and myths (Ciklamini 1963, 138ff).

The chronology of Ragnarök on the other hand is relatively simple. It consists of three stages: (1) pre-Ragnarök; (2) the invasion of Asgard and the destruction of the world; and (3) the rebirth of the universe and the establishment of a new social order, which introduces the mythical future. The duration of the individual phases and the

sequence of particular events, however, are less clear. There is some sense of temporal linearity reflected in this vague chronology, a course of events running from Ymir's age to Ragnarök, but unlike in Christian history, creation is not necessarily a terminal event in a temporal sense. There are three creations involving the gods: (1) the creation of the universe of the fertile world from the body of Ymir; (2) the creation of men and dwarfs after the disruption of the golden age of gods following the creation of the universe; and (3) the creation of the new world after the destruction of the earth and the death of the gods at Ragnarök. The three creations suggest some sense of repetition, the idea of renewal and return. The assumption of a new world after Ragnarök speaks against an apocalyptic-linear expectation of the end of time and suggests an eschatological-cyclic concept of time (Simek 1993, 334). On a daily basis the life of the Scandinavian communities was also determined by cyclicity through the change of natural cycles. But instead of a mechanical measuring of its length, the reckoning of time was based on content. The words *tími* 'time', *tíð* 'time, tide', and *ár* 'year' did not mean merely a particular duration of time but always had some specific content. *Tími* and *tíð* designated the seasons of the year and periods of uncertain duration, while *ár* also meant 'harvest, crop, abundance' (Gurevich 1969, 48). The old Scandinavian's perception of time was man-centered and filled with human substance.[114] The dependence on nature and its cycles also influenced the view on history. Instead of change and progress the emphasis was laid on recurrence and stability. Events and actions that were regularly repeated had more significance than the unique, and their heroes excelled by repeating the actions previously performed by others (Gurevich 1969, 49-50). The significance of Beowulf's deeds, for example, are emphasized by being compared to those of others in the past, and it is his share in the tradition and the manifestation of long-standing heroic ideals that make him an outstanding man, not his uniqueness. The veneration of tradition oriented the minds of the old Scandinavians towards the past, and ensured stability and continuity in their communities. Participation in the past through acts in the present secured the way to the future, and at the same time connected the three temporal layers (past, present, and future) by repetition and recurrence.

[114] The etymology of the word 'world' (Old Norse *veröld*; Old English *weoruld*) nicely illustrates this anthropocentric concept of time: it is a compound derived from the words 'man' and 'age', thus the world is the "age of humankind" (Gurevich 1969, 49).

The conversion to Christianity necessitated a gradual change in this perception of history. The euhemerized Norse gods left the realm of the mythical present and were integrated into the undefined temporal space of the past together with the semi-historical heroes of heroic tales. The wide and capacious notion of the past allowed for an easy integration of different traditions without any perceived conflicts in terms of chronology. The past, the storehouse of stories of outstanding individuals, became expanded and absorbed other stories and heroes through shared features (figura). With the conversion the historical framework of the past (as well as the well-defined future[115]) became the biblical history recorded in the Scriptures, and the Norse gods found their way into it through figurative patterns. By being integrated into history, the pagan gods and heroes acquired a new prestige and were not competing with the Christian God.

Narrative representation in sculpture

We can now turn once again to our sculptures, which provide visual evidence for figurative thinking through their unique way of narrative representation. As opposed to verbal story telling, which necessarily forces some degree of chronology on the story by being linear in time (words and sentences have to be uttered one after the other and their sequence is determined by the speaker or writer), visual storytelling does not necessarily require linearity and allows for some freedom of reception for the observer. Both Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon art is characterized by the predominance of a non-linear structure of story telling. On the Gotland picture stones, for example (cf. Lindquist 1941-42), stories are presented iconically, that is, a longer narrative is evoked by a single characteristic scene or a combination of several scenes in one image. The representations of different episodes as well as different stories are grouped in cause-and-effect relations or around particular characters, but not in chronological order. This type of representation characterizes, for example, the hogbacks, the Skipwith slab, and even the Gosforth cross to some extent. Of course, the physical nature of a cross-shaft necessarily imposes some linearity upon the narrative, as opposed to the relatively unorganized surface of a picture stone or slab, but the lack of paneling allows for some freedom and variation of interpretation.

[115] There is also a history of the future laid out in the teachings of Christ and the Book of Revelation.

This freedom of interpretation is required when combining pagan and Christian stories in the iconographical program of a monument, or utilizing a pagan iconographical representation in a Christian context on a Christian monument. It invites the observer to create his own reading of the images, find connections between them, and interpret the visual program of the monument. This interpretation often means the reinterpretation of traditional iconography. In a few cases (e.g. Weland's association with angels) we witness the moment when an image, originally depicting a mythological narrative, is slowly detached from its original textual background and becomes associated with another narrative based on similarities, either between the two narratives or their visual representations. In some cases, the two associated narratives get blended and the one image unites the two texts, e.g. in the case of Dearham 1, a representation of the Cross and Yggdrasil as the cosmic tree. This interpretative process requires an active observer who is not only knowledgeable about both pagan and Christian iconography but who is also willing to engage in the interpretative process. In the last chapter we should turn our attention to the possible audience of the sculptures and investigate the function of these monuments.

6. On the Function and Reception of the Sculptures

Functions and patrons

The most difficult task of a scholar dealing with ancient artifacts is to determine their function and contemporary reception. Anglo-Saxon stone carvings, many of which have been removed from their original context, are no exception. In the pre-Viking period, stone sculpture was primarily an ecclesiastical art form, which also determined its functions and audience. With the emergence of secular patronage in the Viking period the function of stone carving as public art underwent some changes.

In the pre-Viking period, most stone monuments were carved crosses that presumably served as liturgical stations, especially marking burial grounds. In Northumbria, there had been a tradition of stone funerary sculpture in the pre-Viking period, and there is some continuity in style into the Viking period. Pre-Viking carved stone crosses and slabs were not necessarily used to mark individual burials, except for those of saints,[116] and were usually associated with monastic sites (Stocker 2000, 193). The funerary nature of at least some of the Viking-age monuments was proven by carved pieces (hogbacks) marking burials found in situ at York. As opposed to the earlier carvings, which were ecclesiastical in nature, these monuments marked the graves or commemorated the death of individuals of the local secular elite.

In addition to being funerary monuments, hogbacks have also been suggested by David Stocker (2000, 198-99) to be conversion monuments, with the facing bears at the two ends of the stones representing the church (cf. the bear licking her cubs to life as a symbol of conversion). On these carvings the cubs are replaced by the lord's hall (indicated by the shape of the monument and the frequent appearance of a tile-like pattern on the top) representing a newly converted individual or family. While it seems highly probable that the hogback, an exclusively insular type of monument, developed under the influence of Christianity and Christian art (e.g. house-shaped shrines), it is unlikely that all hogbacks were meant to demonstrate the new faith of the deceased. In fact, many of the hogbacks lack the bear iconography and display clearly pagan iconography in dominant places.

In spite of the growing secularity of stone carvings, the involvement of the church in the production of stone monuments did not cease. Stocker suggested the direct involvement of the Archbishop of York in the production of stone sculpture in Deira, which, with its mixed iconography, represented "a novel type of hybrid Christianity" which the Deiran church was comfortable with. According to Stocker, the archbishop and his subordinates were therefore largely responsible for defining the hybrid Christian culture of Deira, which found its visual expression in stone sculpture. "Far from being provisional or transitional in character, these monuments could be seen as the mark of a new, self-confident Deiran nationalism." (Stocker 2000, 196) This statement is only true as for the erection of these monuments as grave markers of a secular elite in Christian graveyards, but not for the mixed iconography displayed on them. The iconographical programs of the carvings are by no means endproducts of an assimilation process, but mark medial steps thereof. The fact that the Church *tolerated* these pagan traits in mixed communities does not mean that they would have *propagated* them in the form of public art.

The educational and devotional purpose of stone carvings is reflected in the possible function of stone crosses with elaborate iconography as preaching crosses. The term is used mostly for early (pre-Viking) crosses, generally for those in Ruthwell, Bewcastle, and Easby. The only Viking-age cross of similar character is the Gosforth cross, which combines pagan images of the Ragnarök with a depiction of the Crucifixion. People gathered at preaching crosses to hear preaching and to take part in religious ceremonies (e.g. baptism and confirmation) if there was no church in the neighborhood. The preachers might have referred to the images on the monuments in their talks, but they could have also been used for private devotion and meditation.

The custom of praying at high crosses in the pre-Viking period, as well as the early involvement of the secular elite in the erection of these monuments, is attested in the *Hodoeporicon of Saint Willibald*, written before 786 by the Anglo-Saxon nun Huneberc of Heidenheim. She relates how the parents of Willibald "offered him up before the holy cross of our Lord and Saviour" when he was taken seriously ill as an infant, and "this they did not in a church but at the foot of a cross, such as it [was] the custom for nobles and the wealthier men of the [Anglo-]Saxon people to have erected on some prominent spot in

[116] Funerary slabs (especially the so-called pillow stones) found at Lindisfarne and Whitby do suggest that

their estates, dedicated to our Lord and held in great reverence for the convenience of those who wish[ed] to pray daily before it" (transl. by C.H. Talbot in Noble and Head 1995, 146; cf. DuBois 1999, 148). The custom probably continued throughout the Viking period, and references in the twelfth-century Icelandic Homily Book, in an early version of the *Jóns saga Biskups*, as well as in the *Guðmundar saga* indicate that the prayer at outdoor standing crosses was pursued also in medieval Iceland (DuBois 1999, 152).

As we have seen, the Viking-age sculptures discussed in this study could fulfill a number of different functions. The majority of the stones were probably memorial monuments for individuals (although not necessarily funerary monuments) or events, such as landtaking, settlement, conversion, or a victorious battle. Depictions of heroic legends (about Sigurd and Weland) and warrior figures (some of which might have been associated with the cult of Odin) were probably used to commemorate an ancestor or an outstanding warrior. Illustrations of the Weland legend might have also commemorated an artist or artisan through his interpretation as the archetypal craftsmen.

Other stone monuments could mark sacred places or Christian ground. If there was no church yet, a cross might have been erected first at the site where later the church was to be built. In cemeteries the owner or donator of the land may have been commemorated by a cross. Similarly to pre-Viking monuments, most of the Viking-age stone sculptures are associated with ecclesiastical sites. Lancaster and Leeds were also major pre-Viking political and administrative centers, thus their taking over by the Vikings was of major significance, therefore some of the stones could indicate ownership of land by a Viking settler (R. Cramp in private conversation).

The issue of function necessarily evokes the question of patronage. The decline of monasteries and the division of their lands into new land-holdings resulted in the emergence of parish churches under the control of secular landowners who also became patrons of art. Their motives and interests in subsidizing stone monuments varied. According to D.M. Hadley (1997, 94), the combination of Christian motifs and pagan Scandinavian ornaments and iconography, as well as the mixture of religious and secular scenes, represents "either the patronage of a Scandinavian lord trying to record his presence and to legitimate his authority by establishing links with the past and with native traditions; or it was the product of native patronage, by a lord seeking to express newly

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some graves were marked with carved stones.

formed allegiances, and perhaps to understand something of the society of the newcomers; or perhaps it was encouraged by someone whose origins were less certain but who was aware that his existence was something to do with the arrival at an earlier date of Scandinavian settlers."

Whatever the intention of the individual patron (and artist) was, whether justification of power or the exploration or demonstration of origins, the significance of these carvings lies in the fact that they are the products of culturally mixed communities.[117] They were motivated by an interest to bridge differences in culture and origin, and they reflect the intellectual consequences of everyday coexistence. The ability to relate the different traditions, the pagan Scandinavian (or Hiberno-Norse) and the Christian Anglo-Saxon one, and the need to do so suggest an acquaintance with both traditions to a degree which could only be characteristic of individuals or communities who have already taken major steps in the process of cultural adaptation. If these carvings should at all be read as manifestations of cultural identity, then, instead of "Englishness" or "Scandinavianness," they represent that of an Anglo-Scandinavian community.

The carvings with mixed iconography were the result of the mingling of traditions, where everyone contributed something from his or her cultural heritage. It was not the incompatibility of two religious systems, but the compatibility of different cultural traditions which the sculptors of these monuments perceived and represented. Therefore it would be erroneous to interpret the iconography of the carvings as depicting the conflict between old and new gods, as it has often been done before. The iconographical material of different origins was considered to be of equal importance, and the pagan figural elements were featured on the prominent sides of the monuments, together with the Christian ones. Thus it is highly improbable that the purpose of these carvings would have been to promote the superiority of Christianity or to demonstrate the fall of the pagan gods. The pagan gods appear as victorious heroes and brave adversaries of monstrous creatures representing evil, even though most of the fights resulted in the death of the gods. But heroic death was admirable, just like Christ's sacrifice on the cross (often depicted in terms of a heroic act). Thus these gods and heroes who underwent euhemerization and became inserted into history were not seen as the enemies of the

[117] According to the testimony of Scandinavian-style dedication formulas on Manx stone carvings, many of the monuments were erected in the memory of relatives whose names often indicate intermarriage and intercultural influence.

Christian faith or the "losers" of an old system, but as equal partners whose achievements are comparable to those of Christ and the Christian heroes.

Audience and reception

The functions of Viking-age stone monuments suggested above were based on a perception of the sculptures as public monuments, and could be best defined as the "social" functions of art. There is, however, another aspect of functionality which needs to be considered in connection with the reception of these monuments, particularly the iconography of the carvings. This aspect of functionality concerns the "intellectual" function of the artifacts. It is this type of functionality that Pope Gregory the Great had in mind when he defined the role of visual art as "books for the illiterate." If for Gregory books for the literate meant primarily a storehouse of codified knowledge and information (in the form of both primary and secondary texts), some of the carvings examined here are clearly more than visualized books or stories.

The iconic representation of both Christian and heathen subject matter was to activate a pre-existing knowledge of the narratives depicted. While the iconography of the carvings was necessarily based, at least to some extent, on traditional "codified" representations (more in the case of Christian subject matter and much less in the case of the pagan material), it allowed for some variation in the corresponding texts that they recalled in the minds of the observers. As we have seen above, the emphasis in certain pagan narratives shifted under the influence of Christianity. Similarities in the visual representation also invited cross references between different narratives and in some cases resulted even in the mixing of different stories (cf. the overlap between the Weland and Sigurd stories).

The monastic environment of early sculptures defined a particular audience, well-versed in Christian matters, which was not only familiar with Christian iconography, but also capable of deciphering complicated iconographical programs, as represented for example on the famous Bewcastle and Ruthwell crosses. The full understanding of these programs required an active engagement of the observers in an act similar to the monastic practice of *ruminatio*, that is prayerful reading, contemplating on, and interpreting of Christian texts (cf. Bailey 1996b, 26). Viking-age monuments with an elaborate program of mixed (pagan and Christian) iconography (e.g. the Gosforth cross, the 'Fishing Stone',

the Halton cross, the two Leeds crosses, the Dearham cross) required a similar intellectual engagement from the observer. These carvings were intended to be illustrative and contemplative at the same time, and in that they remind us of riddles which are also both descriptive and contemplative. As "visual riddles" the carvings inspired the observer to discover new meanings of well-known stories by putting them in a new light through allusions to Christianity, suggested by iconographical references in the visual context. The reinterpretation of the familiar provided a way to deal with the encounter of different cultural traditions. Every single attempt to interpret the iconography of these monuments was a step on the path of cultural and religious accommodation, and it was enabled by a mental disposition to search for similarities and to find shared patterns.

A few generations later the knowledgeable audience was gone and the pagan iconographical elements gradually lost their meanings. The carvings ceased to fulfill their original function. Many of them were reused as building material or architectural ornaments in later churches, while others were destroyed or forgotten about. But some, "by curious little links of effect," came under the eyes of a scholar…[118]

[118] Cf. as quoted above from George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, chapter 41: "… the stone which has been kicked by generations of clowns may come by curious little links of effect under the eyes of a scholar, through whose labours it may at last fix the date of invasions and unlock religions…"

SZTE Egyetemi Könyvtár SZEGED 14.

7. CONCLUSION

The pagan iconographical elements displayed on Viking-age stone carvings of northern England were imported from the Scandinavian homeland on perishable media (mainly wood carvings and textiles) and probably circulated in that form in the Scandinavian settlement areas. The transference of these images to stone is the result of an integration process and marks the adaptation of local Anglo-Saxon artistic traditions by the Scandinavian settlers. Since in pre-Viking England stone sculpture was an exclusively ecclesiastical art form, the adaptation of the new artistic medium also suggests some degree of familiarity with the original context of stone monuments. In spite of the secular patronage of Viking-age sculpure and the appearance of pagan and secular subject matter on the monuments, these sculptures show obvious links with the Christian cultural context: the majority of Viking-age stones were located at ecclesiastical sites (parish churches and graveyards with Christian burial practices), they are frequently cruciform in shape, some of them display elements of Christian iconography, and the nature of the commemorative monuments reflects an adaptation of Christian burial and commemorative practices.

Compared to the rich iconographical material that seems to have existed in Scandinavia—as suggested, for example, by the Gotland picture stones—, the northern English carvings display only a relatively narrow selection of pagan topics. As the above survey of the monuments and their functions has shown, the selection of the material seems to have been made on the basis of certain social needs (e.g. the ancestor cult reflected in the commemorative function of the Weland and Sigurd iconography, or the valkyries and the cult of Odin suggesting the significance of ethical values of the warrior culture in the Anglo-Scandinavian communities), but the Christian context of the monuments (location, shape, associated burial practices, or the appearance of Christian iconographical elements) also suggests another criterion: compatibility with the new religion.

Indeed, as we have seen above, each depicted topic shows possible links with various Christian narratives, which probably promoted the circulation and survival of these topics. Some monuments even display a combination of pagan and Christian

elements, which suggests a connection between or even comparison of the two narrative traditions. The juxtaposition of pagan and Christian iconography has often been explained as serving the needs of the Church by demonstrating the inferiority of the pagan tradition. Considering the function of the monuments, this seems improbable: the commemorative use of pagan motifs presupposes a positive attitude towards the heroes and gods depicted. The iconography of the carvings rather points to the coexistence of the two traditions and indicates a cultural integration and religious accommodation process, which is otherwise poorly documented. In this context the carvings serve as cultural-historical documents for the modern scholar and reveal some aspects of the integration process. First, the dating of the carvings indicates that the conversion of the Scandinavian settlers (on a personal and intellectual level, not only formally) was largely completed by the first half of the eleventh century. Second, the appearance of pagan iconography on the carvings over a period of more than 150 years suggests a gradual process of integration. And third, the secular partonage of the carvings points towards the growing significance of parish churches, which were established in consequence of the influence of the Scandinavian settlement on monatsic land-holdings, and their role in the conversion process.

In addition to accounting for the selective use of pagan motifs, I have also attempted to explain their status in the accommodation process. Since the sculptural evidence suggests a certain degree of comparison between the pagan and Christian narrative traditions by way of various kinds of shared patterns, typology seems to be an obvious starting point for understanding the logic behind the iconographical programs of the monuments, as well as the working of the minds of those who created them. Having provided an overview of the concept of typology and a criticism of the use of the term in the present context, I have arrived at figurative thinking, which provides an intellectual framework by means of which the demythologized gods and heroes of the native Scandinavian tradition came to be integrated into the grand narrative of Christian history. The comparable Norse and Christian concepts of time and history promoted this integration and the shared patterns served as anchors for the integration of non-Christian stories and characters. Of course, the two religions never merged in the traditional sense of syncretism. The system of Christian thought remained largely unaltered, and it was enriched by the pagan elements, because a need was felt to accommodate certain aspects of the native tradition to promote the understanding of the new religion and to satisfy

specific sociocultural needs. Besides their "social functions" as funerary monuments, commemorative stones, markers of sacred places, and indicators of political and social status, the sculptures invited their observers to contemplate the carvings and discover new meanings of well-known stories in a new cultural context.

The contribution of my dissertation to the scholarship of Viking-age culture in England is twofold. On the one hand, I provide a catalogue of all Viking-age monuments with pagan iconography from the North of England, offer new readings of some carvings, and discuss the significance of each theme and subject matter in the Anglo-Scandinavian cultural context. On the other hand, I examine the sculptures as cultural-historical documents of the integration process that took place in the Anglo-Scandinavian communities, and contribute to our understanding of the integration as an intellectual process. Due to the lack of other kinds of documentation, the visual evidence of the carvings provides a unique means for reconstructing this exciting period of Anglo-Saxon history. Of course, every attempt at reconstruction entails the possibilty of error. Hopefully the emergence of further evidence in the future will help us to refine the assessments proposed above.

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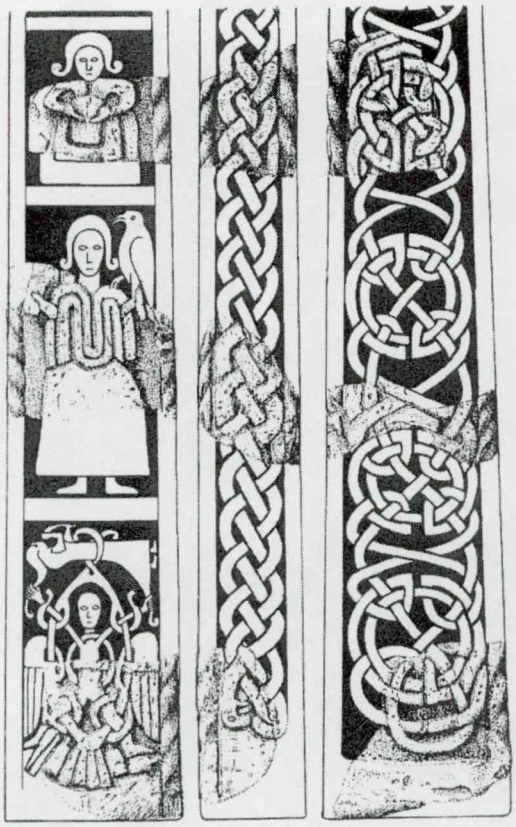
APPENDIX

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Leeds, Parish Church

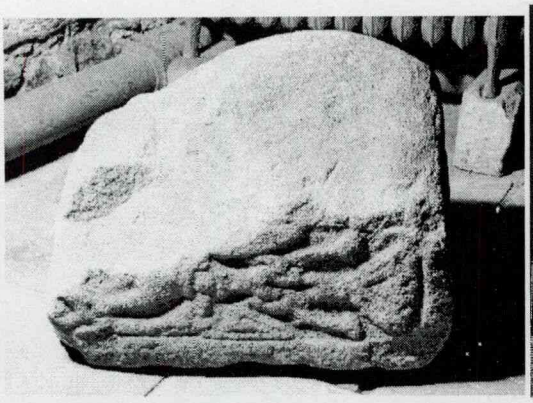
SZTE Egyetemi Könyvtár
SZEGED
14



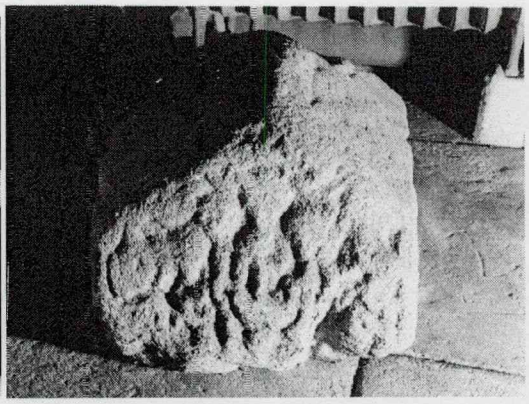
2. Leeds, City Museum

3. Sherburn 2A

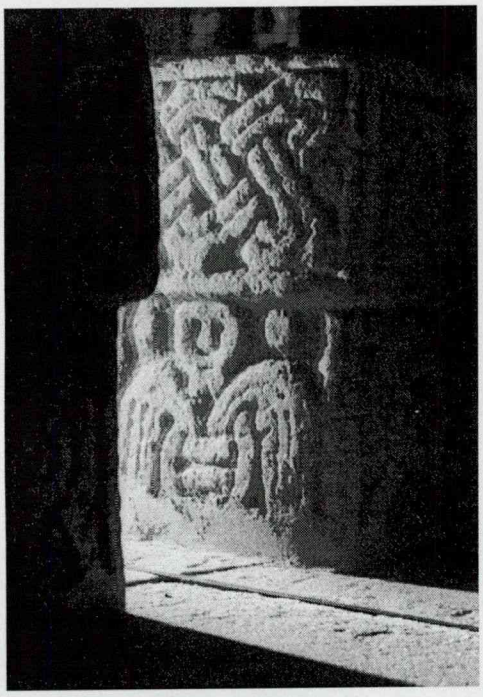
4. Sherburn 3A



5. Bedale 6A



6. Bedale 6B

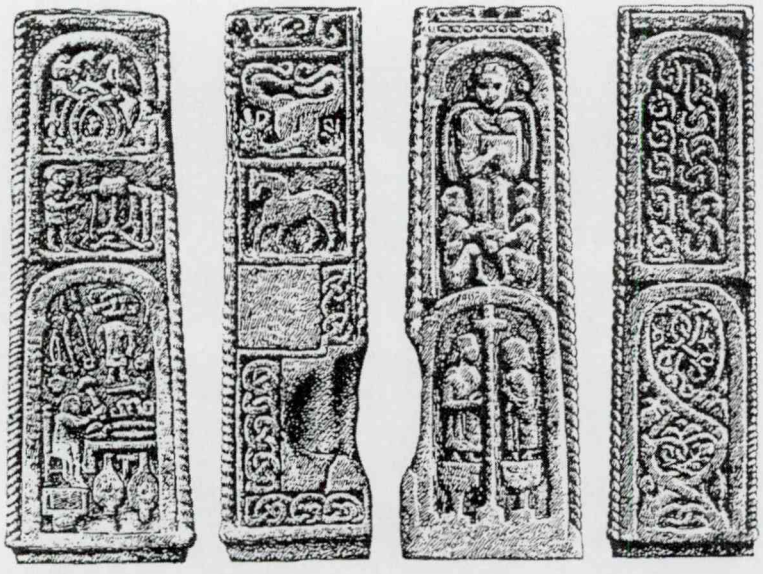


7. Crathorne 1C

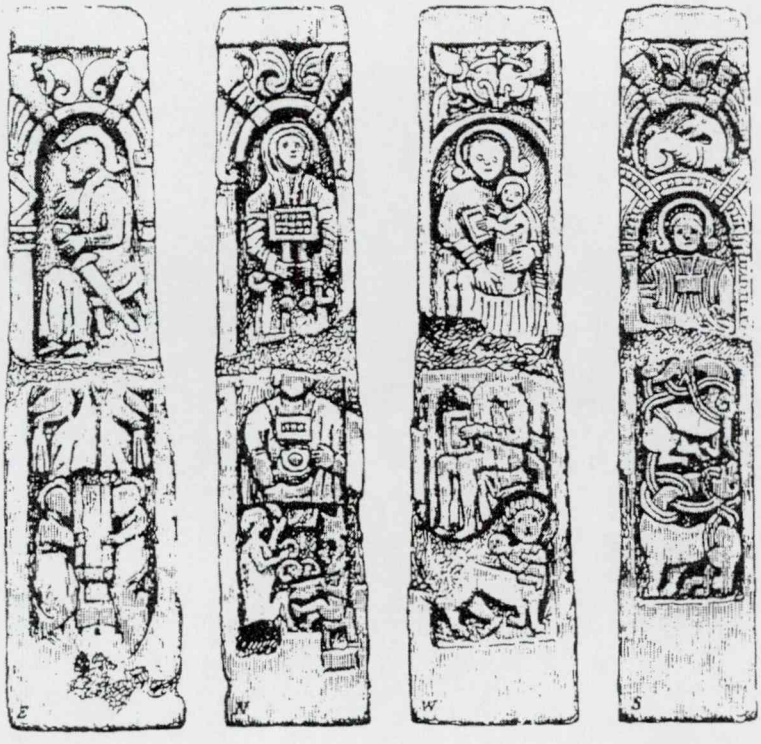
8. Eggleschiffe 1A

9. York Minster 9A

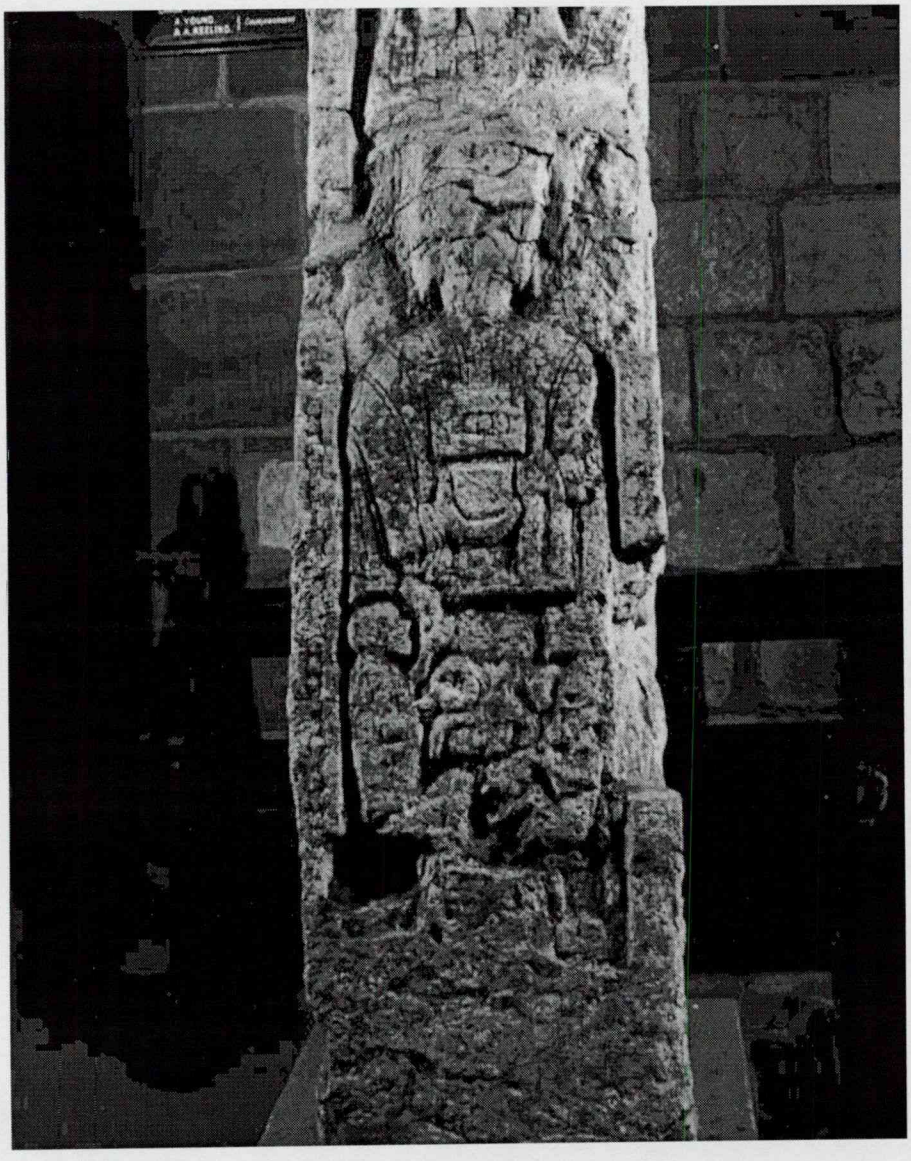
10. Brompton 3A



11. Halton

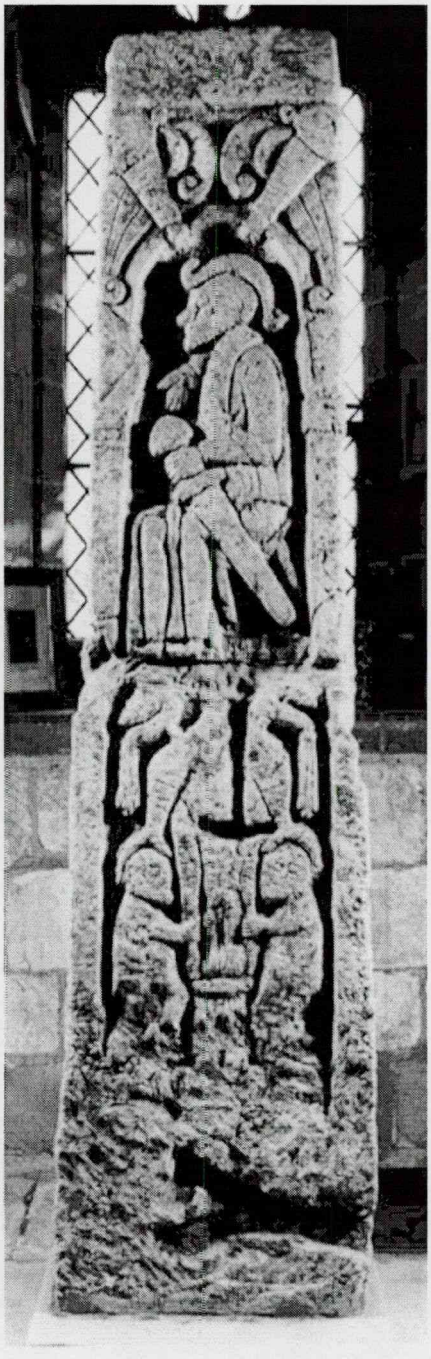


12. Nunburnholme 1a-b



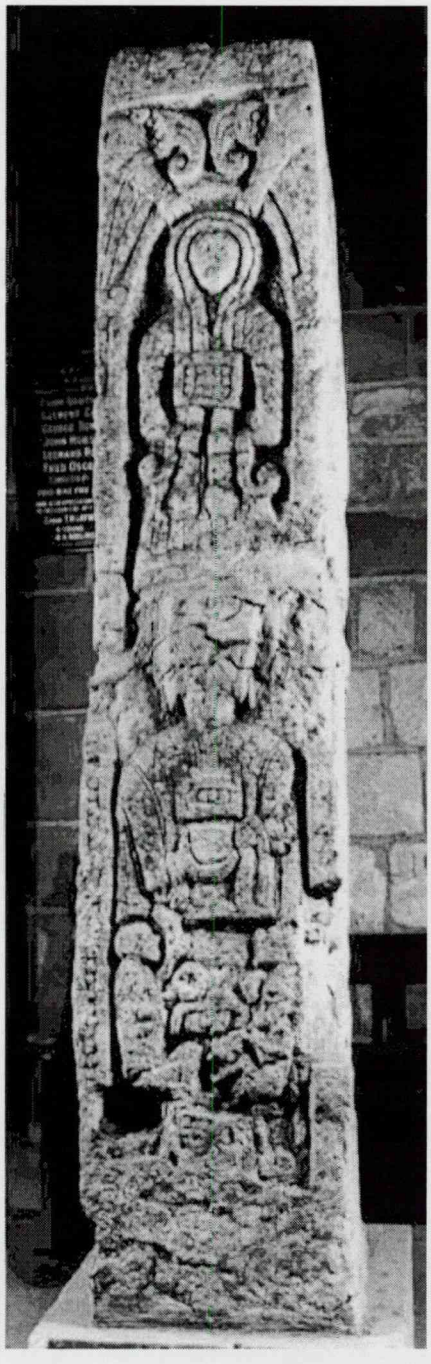
13. Nunburnholme 1bD

14. Nunburnholme 1aD and 1bB



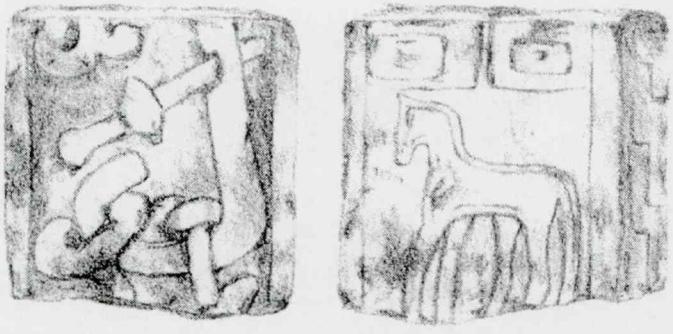
15. Nunburnholme 1aA and 1bC

16. Nunburnholme 1aC and 1bA



17. Nunburnholme 1aB and 1bD

18. Kirby Hill 2A

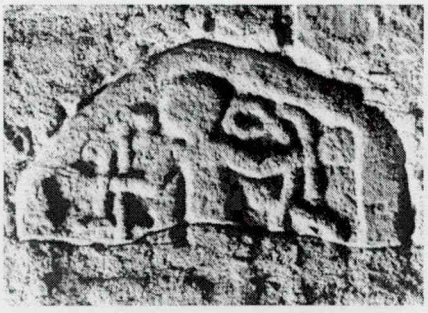


19. Kirby Hill 9A and C

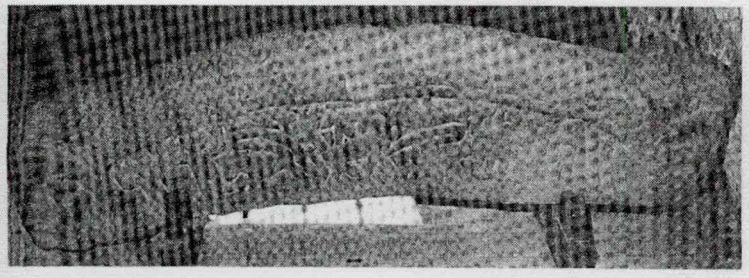
20. York Minster 34D

21. York Minster 34A

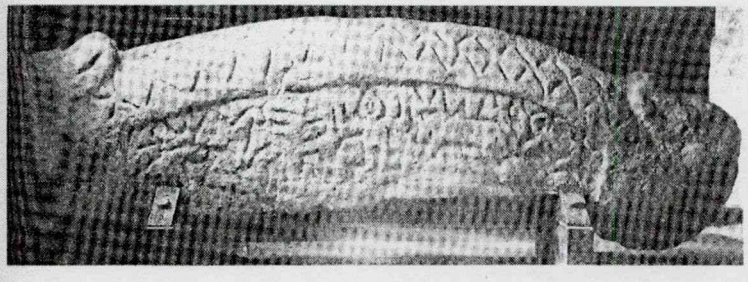
22. York Minster 34C



23. York Minster 46B



Heysham (side A)



Heysham (side B)

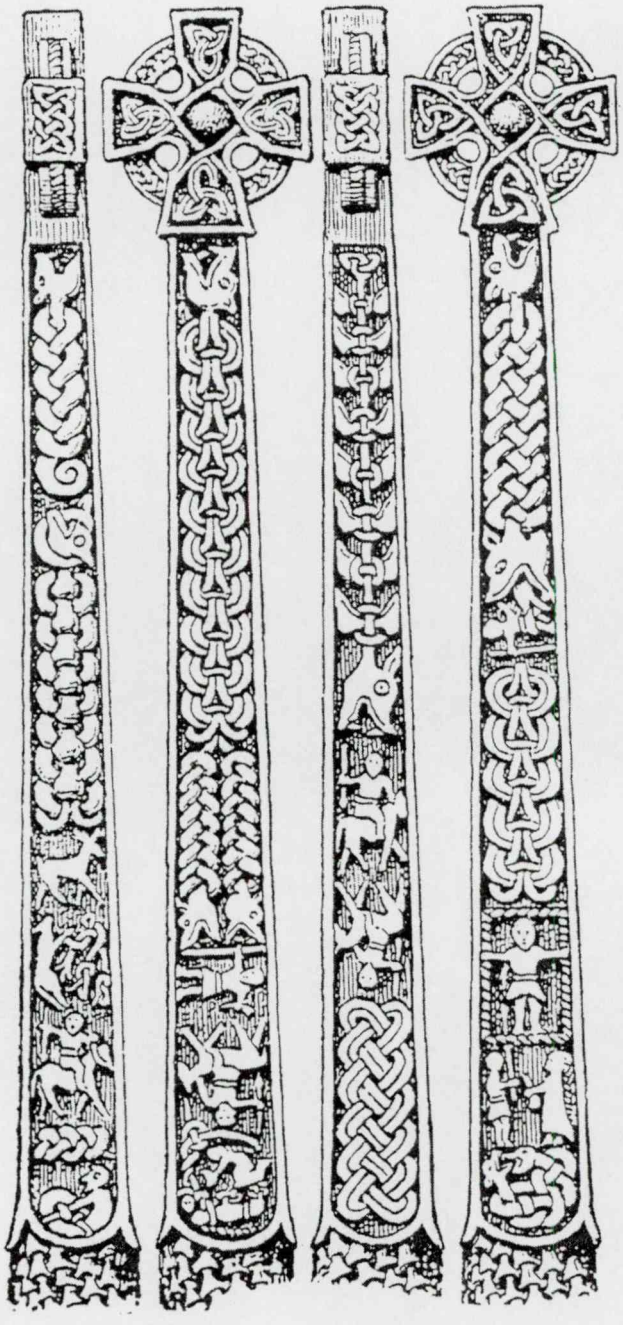
24. Heysham, hogback

25. Gosforth 6 (the 'Fishing Stone')

26. Sockburn 21A

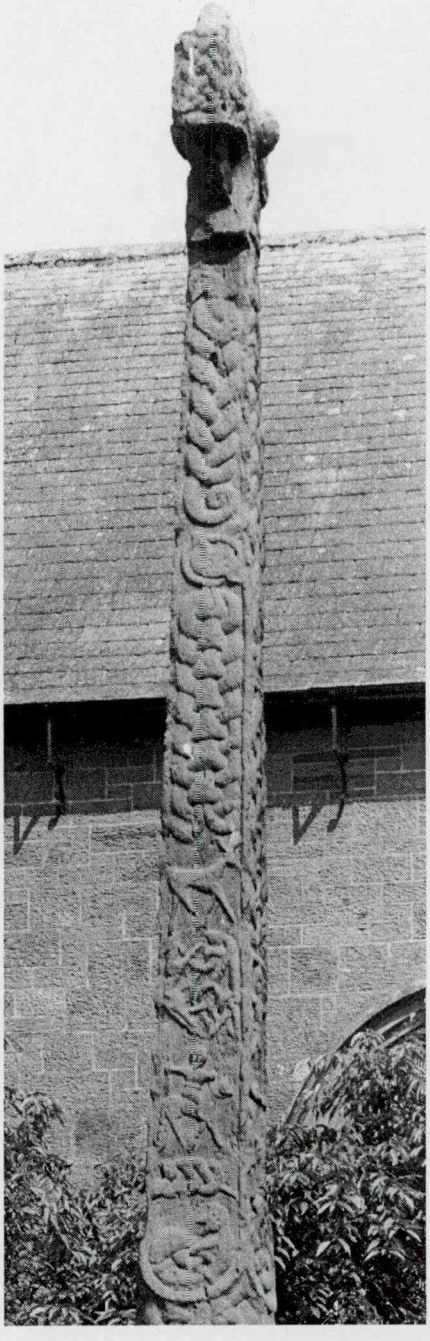
27. Sockburn 21C

28. Forcett 4



29. Gosforth 1

30. Gosforth 1A



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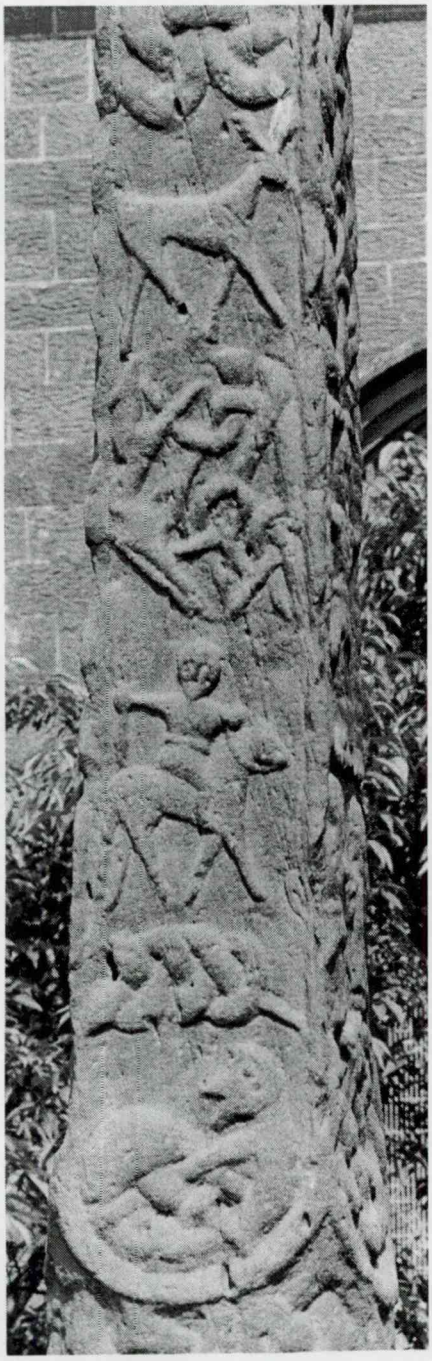
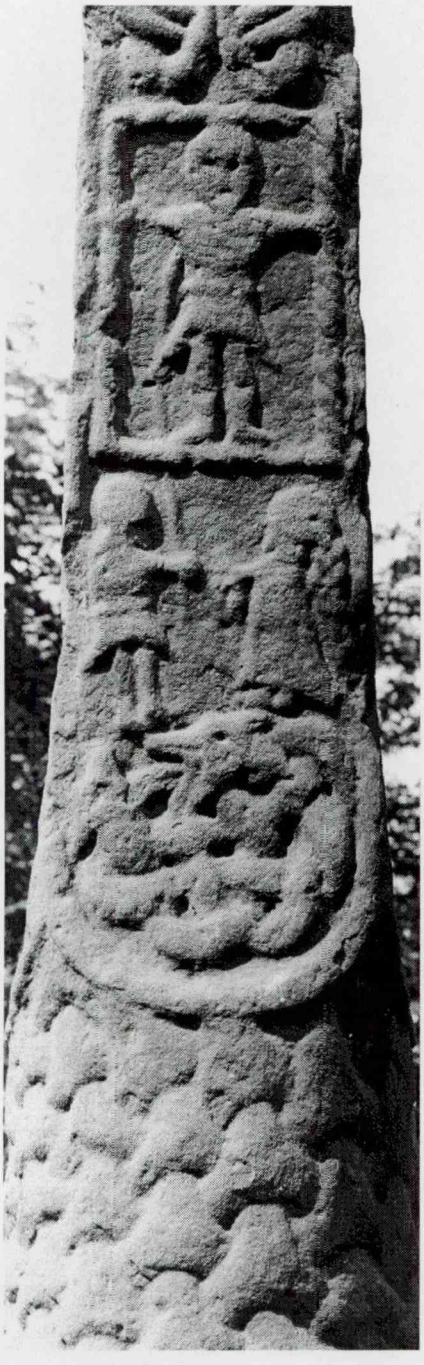
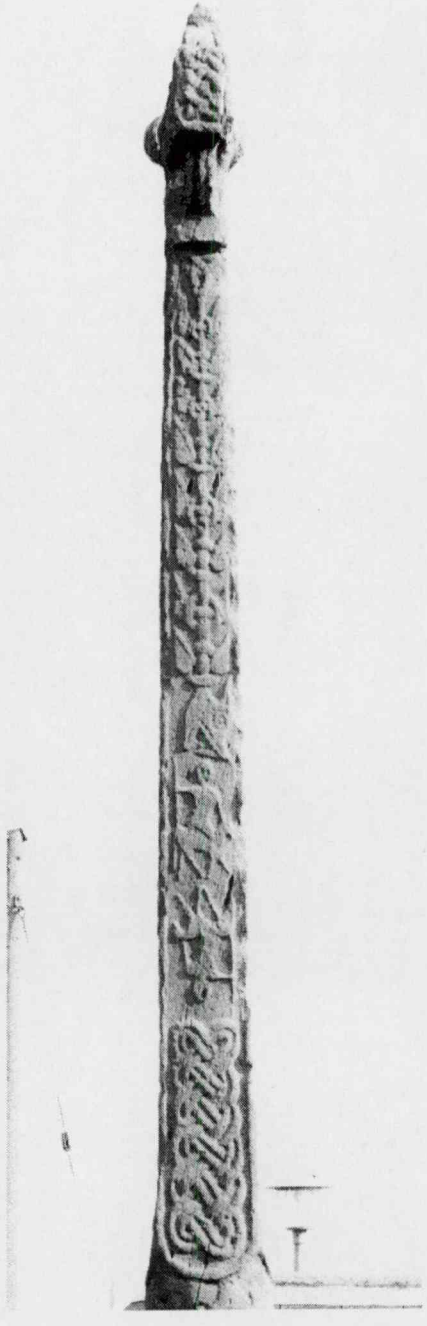


32. Gosforth 1B

33. Gosforth 1C

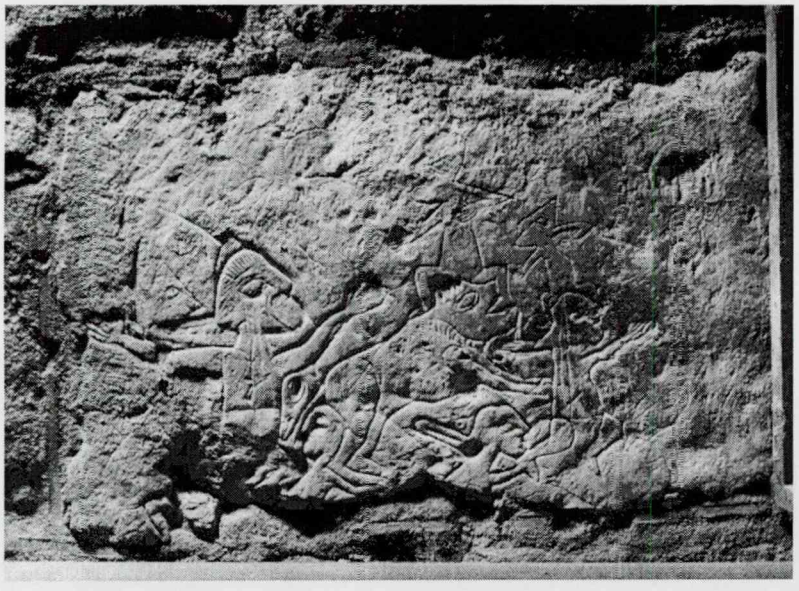


34. Gosforth 1C

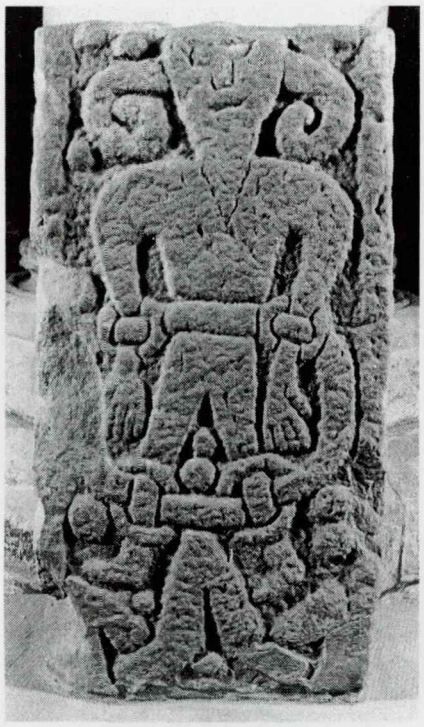


35. Gosforth 1D

36. Ovingham 1C



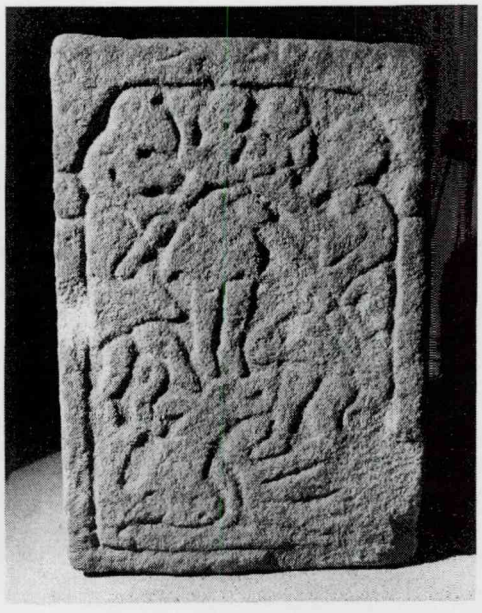
37. Skipwith 1



38. Kirkby Stephen 1A

39. Gainford 4C

40. Gainford 4B



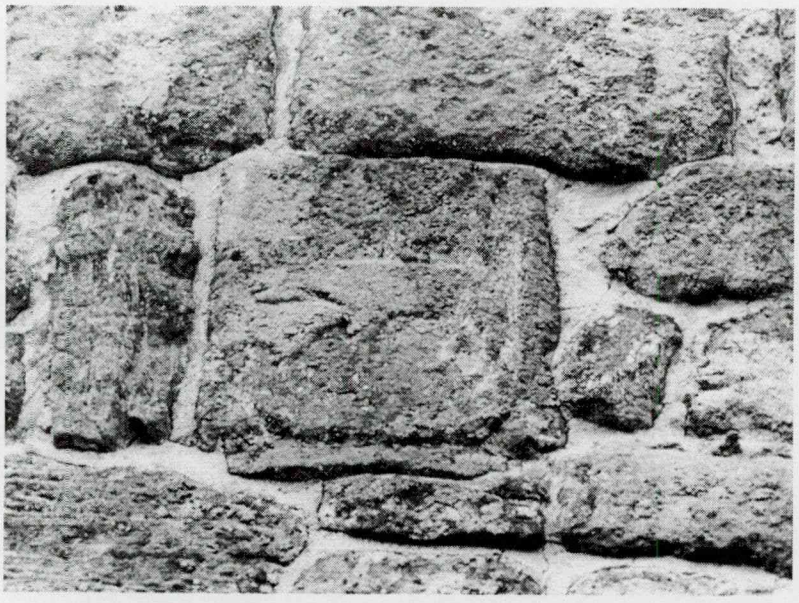
41. Chester-le-Street 11A

42. Great Clifton 1A

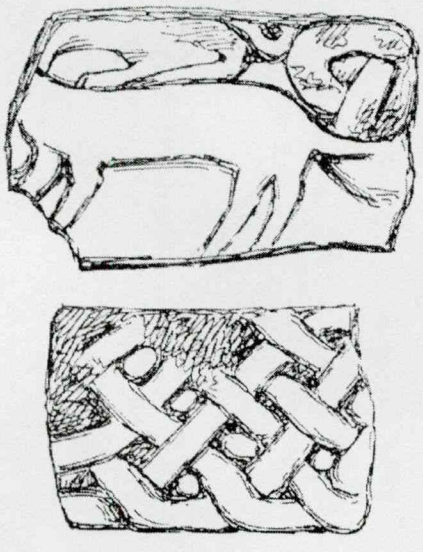
43. Dacre 2A

44. Forcett 1C

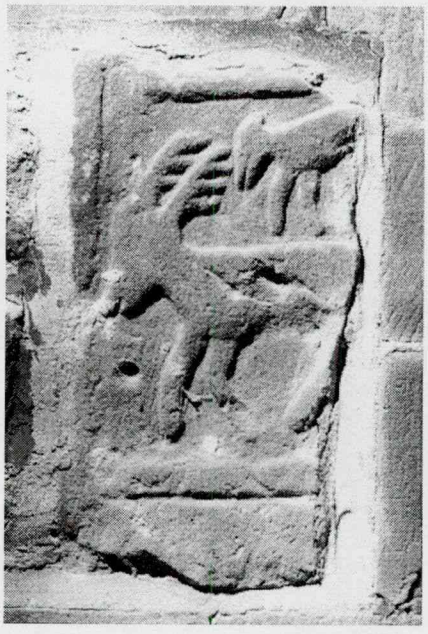
45. Middleton 1A



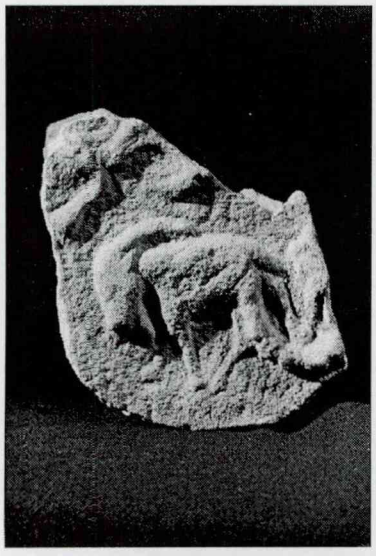
46. Ellerburn 5



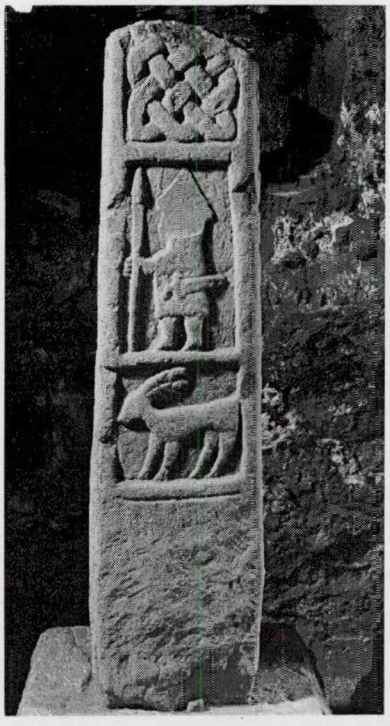
47. Wath 4



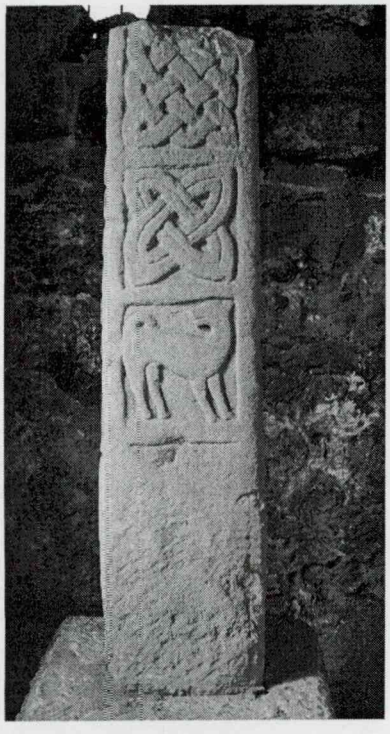
48. Kirklevington 11



49. Melsonby 3A

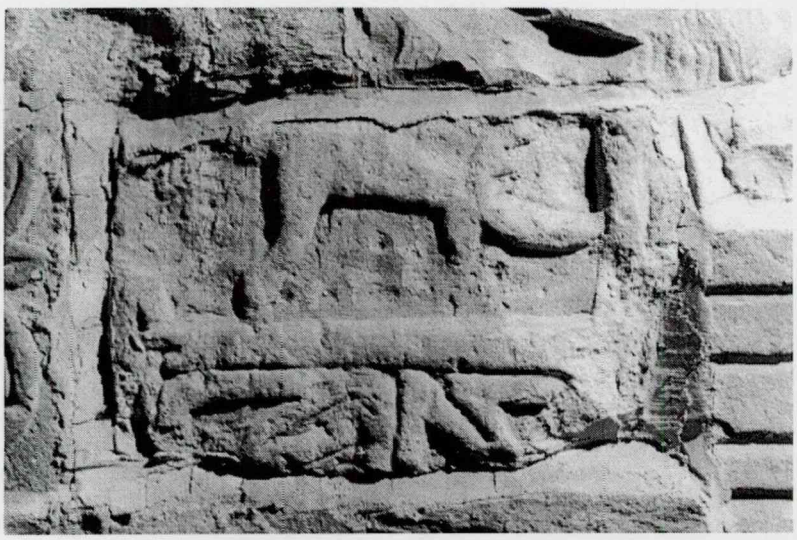


50. Sockburn 7A

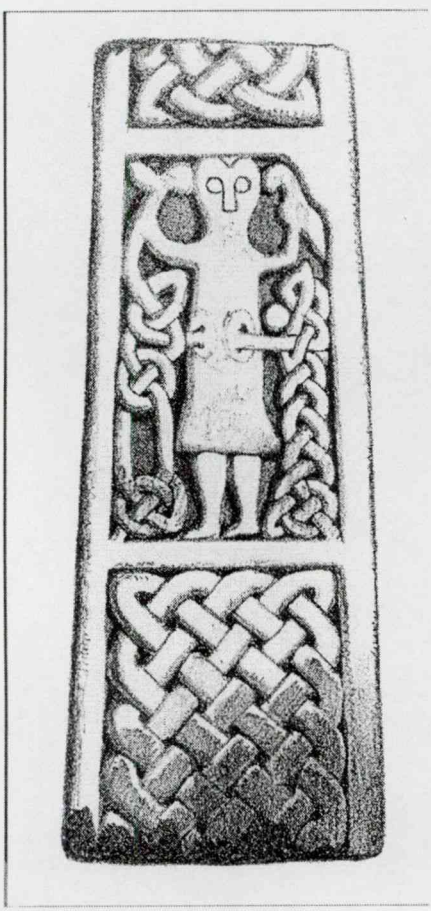


51. Sockburn 7C

52. Brompton 4A



53. Stanwick 9



54. Billingham 1A

55. Kirklevington 2A

56. Sherburn 1A

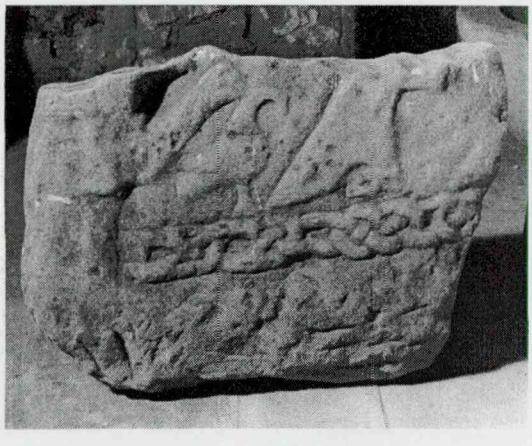
57. Sockburn 3A

58. Baldersby 1A

59. Baldersby 1C

60. Kirkbymoorside 3A

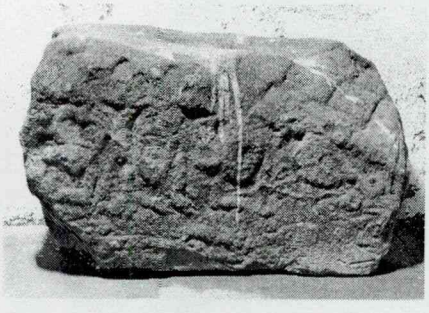
61. Dearham 1A



62. Sockburn 15A

63. Lowther 4C

64. Lowther 4A



65. Lowther 5A

66. Lowther 5C